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JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

LIFE OF  
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

BY  
E E BROWN

Author of

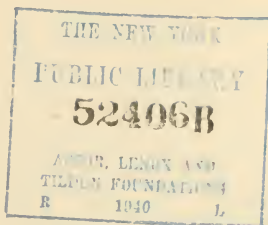
Life of James A. Garfield  
Life of Gen. U. S. Grant  
Life of Oliver Wendell Holmes  
and others



BOSTON  
D LOTHROP COMPANY  
FRANKLIN AND HAWLEY STREETS

[C1887]

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# JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ANCESTRY.

SAYS a certain writer, "An author cut off from all his surroundings is as difficult to understand as figures cut out by children and separated from the grouping and background of a picture;" and, with a somewhat similar feeling, whenever the name of James Russell Lowell is spoken, we immediately think of him at Elmwood, the delightful old parsonage in Cambridge, Mass., where, upon the twenty-second of February, 1819, the poet was born, and where, with the exception of his late residence abroad, the greater part of his life has been passed.

His father, Dr. Charles Lowell, was a Unitarian clergyman of the mild, conservative type — a man

full of good works and remarkable for his unwavering devotion to duty, his excellent judgment, and his sound, practical common sense in the every-day affairs of life.

"I may be pardoned a grain of pride," writes the Rev. C. A. Bartol, "in the son of that Charles Lowell, my colleague, who, for more than half a century in Boston, was an apparition of manly beauty in the figure of a saint. The belfry of the old building he preached in was once a Sunday-school room, and sometimes a haunt of doves ; and what is now known as Elmwood in Cambridge, was the dear pastor's home. How little, in 1837, the date of his ordaining prayer on my head, could I dream that a bird of such strength of wing and flaming Oriental plumage, was nestling among the pines and would fly forth so boldly from the handsome — homely tower of what a remnant of worshippers with great love, call still the West Church."

At the recent celebration of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of this famous old church, Lowell himself paid a loving tribute to his father's colleague : " I well remember," he said, " the day when Dr. Bartol was ordained here. I was then a junior in college. I remember the impression made upon me that day by Dr. Bartol's face, the



glow of enthusiasm tempered by sweetness and humanity. It was a glow which, I am glad to say, I still see there ; a glow which argues that the enthusiasm of early life has not faded ; and that this persistence, this fidelity to the dreams of one's youth, if it be not the better part of genius, is certainly of the same indefinable and precious essence. . . . Of the church itself, it is, so far as I understand, still a church after my father's own heart, who would never allow himself to be called anything but a Christian."

The Lowells trace their descent from Percival Lowell, or Lowle (as the name was sometimes spelled), who came from Bristol, England, about the year 1639, and settled in Newbury, Mass. John Lowell, a descendant of Percival, who was born in 1704, and was graduated at Harvard in 1721, was the first minister of Newburyport. His son, bearing the same name, was born in 1743, and rose to prominent and influential positions in connection with the organization of the State and Federal Governments after the Revolution. He was a leading member of the Massachusetts Convention of 1780, and it is claimed by the Lowell family that he was the author of the section in the Bill of Rights by which slavery was abolished in Massachusetts. He was also a member of the Conti-

mental Congress in 1781, was made judge of the Court of Appeals in 1782, and Chief-Justice of the United States Court, first circuit, of 1801. One of his sons was Dr. Charles Lowell, the father of our poet, and another son, Francis Cabot Lowell, was the first among the colonists to perceive and utilize the water power of New England; it was for him that "Lowell," the city of manufactories on the Merrimac River, was named.

John Lowell, Jr., a son of Francis Cabot Lowell, was the founder of the Lowell Institute in Boston, by which a bequest of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars provides annual courses of free lectures. He was born in 1779, and after receiving some education in the schools of Boston went with his father to Europe, and studied for awhile in the high school at Edinburgh. On his return to America he entered Harvard College, when scarcely fifteen years of age, but his health failing him, he was unable to complete his college course. After some years of travel in foreign countries, he served in the legislative bodies of his State and city, and devoted his leisure time to the study of scientific and literary subjects. Losing by death his whole family, his wife and two children, he resumed his travels, and having crossed the Mediterranean, he ascended the Nile, was shipwrecked in the Red

Sea, and finally died at Bombay on the fourth of March, 1836.

As one happy instance of the influence of the Lowell Institute, may be mentioned the fact that when Sir Charles Lyell was here to deliver his lectures in the Lowell course, he recommended the engagement of Agassiz, then a young man and almost unknown in the world of science. Finding such unusual advantages here for the pursuit of his favorite study, the young naturalist resolved to make his home in America, although when he came to deliver the lectures, he had no intention of remaining permanently.

The Russells, from whom the poet receives his middle name, are also of English descent. Richard Russell came to America from Herefordshire, and settled in Charlestown in 1640. He was a prominent merchant, engaging largely in foreign commerce. For a number of years he was representative, speaker, and treasurer of the colony; for twenty-six years a selectman, and for seventeen years, chairman of the board. He died in 1676, leaving in his will the sum of two hundred pounds to be funded for the use of the poor in the town, one hundred pounds to Harvard College, and other legacies of a similar character. His wife died soon after their arrival at the colony,

and in the old burying-ground at Charlestown the inscription,

MAUD RUSSELL

DECEASED,

1642,

may still be clearly deciphered on an old altar tomb. This date is sixteen years older than any inscription to be found in the old burying-grounds of Boston, or indeed of any town in Massachusetts. Its preservation is probably owing to the character of the stone—a fine-grained gneiss. The tomb of Richard was destroyed during the siege of Boston, but was replaced by his descendants in 1781, and is a true copy of the original. There are six other altar tombs to different members of the Russell family in this old cemetery at Charlestown. One of them inscribed to the memory of “James Russell,” son of Richard and Maud, has a deep cavity from which the sculptured coat-of-arms has been taken out by the hand of some desecrating vandal. It was this same son James who bore so prominent and manly a part in the troublesome times of 1688–89.

The mother of James Russell Lowell was of Scotch descent, and her maiden name “Spence,” seems to have been the same as “Spens,”—indeed a certain tradition exists in the family that one



of their ancestors was Sir Patrick Spens, so celebrated in the old English ballad. She had a wonderful gift for languages and an enthusiastic love for poetry, especially for old songs and romances.

It was from her, doubtless, that James, the youngest child, inherited his passion for the beautiful both in nature and in art. As Lowell himself says, in after years, "A mythology that broods over us in our cradles, that mingles with the lullaby of the nurse and the winter-evening legends of the chimney-corner, that brightens day with the possibility of divine encounters, is of other substance than one which we take down from our bookcase, sapless as the shelf it stood on, and remote from all present sympathy with man or nature as a town history. It is something like the difference between live metaphor and dead personification."

There were five children born to the good pastor and his wife : Charles the eldest, who bore his father's name, Robert Till Spence (the author of "The New Priest in Conception Bay"), Mary (now Mrs. Putnam and a lady of rare culture and ability), Rebecca, who died in middle age, and James Russell.

We can easily picture to ourselves the free, happy, out-door life of the Lowell children in that

most delightful of country homes, the old Elmwood parsonage. The ample grounds still cover a number of acres, and the broad, grassy lawns slope off into shady orchards and groves of fragrant pine and fir that in the summer time are all alive with birds. There grew the yellow dandelions — those “Eldorados in the grass” — “first pledges of the blithesome May,” of which the poet writes so lovingly : —

“My childhood’s earliest thoughts are linked with thee ;  
 The sight of thee calls back the robin’s song,  
 Who, from the dark old tree  
 Beside the door, sang clearly all day long,  
 And I, secure in childish piety,  
 Listened as if I heard an angel sing  
 With news from heaven, which he could bring  
 Fresh every day to my untainted ears  
 When birds and flowers and I were happy peers.”

And it was of his happy childhood here at Elmwood he was thinking when he wrote : —

“Snap chord of manhood’s tenses strain !  
 To-day I will be boy again ;  
 . . . . .  
 The robin sings as of old from the limb !  
 The cat-bird croons in the lilac-bush !  
 Through the dim arbor, himself more dim,  
 Silently hops the hermit-thrush.  
 . . . . .  
 And our tall elm, this hundredth year  
 Doge of our leafy Venice here,

Who with an annual ring doth wed  
The blue Adriatic overhead,  
Shadows with his palatial mass  
The deep canals of flowing grass.

O unestranged birds and bees !  
O face of nature always true !  
O never-unsympathizing trees !  
O never-rejecting roof of blue,  
Whose rash disherison never falls  
On us unthinking prodigals,  
Yet who convictest all our ill,  
So grand and unappeasable !  
Methinks my heart from each of these  
Plucks part of childhood back again,  
Long there imprisoned, as the breeze  
Doth every hidden odor seize  
Of wood and water, hill and plain ;  
Once more am I admitted peer  
In the upper house of nature here,  
And feel through all my pulses run  
The royal blood of breeze and sun."

Elmwood itself has an interesting history. Originally the Stratton estate, it was bought by Thomas Oliver, the Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts in the year 1790. The estate consisted of fifteen acres, for which the sum of one hundred and thirty-eight pounds sterling was paid. The house, a large, square, three-storied edifice, somewhat resembles the Craigie Mansion in its general plan of architecture. It is painted yellow with

white trimmings, faces the east, is embowered with trees, and stands some distance back from the street. Most of the elms which gave to this beautiful country seat the name of "Elmwood," are of the English variety which, in their sturdy growth, may be easily distinguished from our native trees.

A thick hedge of pines, willows, and horse-chestnuts, filled in with a great variety of shrubs, surrounds the enclosure, and in the rear is a grove of noble oaks which sprang from acorns planted by the poet's father. When the "obnoxious Olivers" were obliged to leave the country, "being waited upon by a Boston committee of four thousand," the house was bought by Elbridge Gerry, a man of considerable note in his day, and from whose crooked plan of districting, the term "gerrymandering" was coined. In the year 1818 the house was bought by Dr. Lowell.

The "herons of Elmwood" still fly back and forth between the pines and the marshes, though only four miles distant to the east, may be seen the spires and roofs of Boston : —

"Below, the Charles — a stripe of nether sky,  
Now hid by rounded apple-trees between,  
Whose gaps the misplaced sail sweeps bellying by,  
Now flickering golden through a woodland screen,

Then spreading out, at his next turn beyond,  
A silver circle like an inland pond —  
Slips seaward silently through marshes purple and green.”  
“ There gleams my native village, dear to me,  
Though higher change's waves each day are seen,  
Whelming fields famed in boyhood's history,  
Sanding with houses the diminished green ;  
There, in red brick, which softening time defies,  
Stand square and stiff the Muses' factories ; —  
How with my life lit up is every well-known scene ! ”

So writes Lowell, as the beautiful view from the study windows at Elmwood rises before him. And what warm affection for the old home is expressed in the succeeding stanza :

“ Flow on, dear river ! not alone you flow  
To outward sight, and through your marshes wind ;  
Fed from the mystic springs of long ago,  
Your twin flows silent through my world of mind :  
Grow dim, dear marshes, in the evening's gray !  
Before my inner sight ye stretch away,  
And will forever, though these fleshy eyes grow blind.”

## CHAPTER II.

### BOYHOOD.

OF Cambridge in the early days of Lowell we have a delightful picture from his own pen.

“Boston,” he says, “was not then a city, and Cambridge was still a country village, with its own habits and traditions, not yet feeling too strongly the force of suburban gravitation. Approaching it from the west by what was then called the New Road, you would pause on the brow of Symonds’ Hill to enjoy a view singularly soothing and placid. In front of you lay the town, tufted with elms, lindens, and horse-chestnuts, which had seen Massachusetts a colony, and were fortunately unable to emigrate with the Tories by whom, or by whose fathers they were planted. Over it rose the noisy belfry of the church, and the slim yellow spire of the parish meeting-house, by no means ungraceful, and then an invariable characteristic of New England religious architecture. On your right the Charles slipped smoothly through green and purple salt-meadows, darkened, here and there, with the

blossoming black-grass as with a stranded cloud-shadow. Over these marshes, level as water, but without its glare, and with softer and more soothing gradations of perspective, the eye was carried to a horizon of softly-rounded hills. To your left hand, upon the Old Road, you saw some half-dozen dignified old houses of the colonial time, all comfortably fronting southward. If it were early June, the rows of horse-chestnuts along the fronts of these houses showed through every crevice of their dark heap of foliage, and on the end of every drooping limb, a cone of pearly flowers, while the hill behind was white or rosy with the crowding blooms of various fruit trees. . . . A few houses, chiefly old, stood around the bare Common, with ample elbow-room, and old women, capped and spectacled, still peered through the same windows from which they had watched Lord Percy's artillery rumble by to Lexington, or caught a glimpse of the handsome Virginia General who had come to wield our homespun Saxon chivalry. People were still living who regretted the late unhappy separation from the mother island, who had seen no gentry since the Vassals went, and who thought that Boston had ill kept the day of her patron-saint, Botolph, on the seventeenth of June, 1775. The hooks were to be seen from which had

hung the hammocks of Burgoyne's captive red-coats. If memory does not deceive me, women still washed clothes in the town spring, clear as that of Bandusia. One coach sufficed for all the travel to the metropolis."

Like all boys, his visits to the barber's shop were marked with a "red letter :"

"The boy who was to be clipped there, was always accompanied to the sacrifice by a troop of friends, who thus inspected the curiosities *gratis*. While the watchful eye of R. wandered to keep in check these rather unscrupulous explorers, the unpausing shears would sometimes overstep the boundaries of strict tonsorial prescription and make a notch through which the phrenological developments could be distinctly seen. As Michael Angelo's design was modified by the shape of his block, so R., rigid in artistic properties, would contrive to give an appearance of design to this aberration, by making it the key-note to his work, and reducing the whole head to an appearance of premature baldness. What a charming place it was, — how full of wonder and delight! The sunny little room, fronting southwest upon the Common, rang with canaries and Java sparrows, nor were the familiar notes of robin, thrush and bobolink wanting. A large white cockatoo harangued



vaguely, at intervals, in what we believed (on R's authority) to be the Hottentot language. He had an unveracious air, but what inventions of former grandeur he was indulging in, what sweet South African Argos he was remembering, what tropical heats and giant trees by un conjectured rivers, known only to the wallowing hippopotamus, we could only guess at. The walls were covered with curious old Dutch prints, beaks of albatross and penguin, and whales' teeth fantastically engraved. There was Frederick the Great, with head drooped plottingly, and keen side-long glance from under the three-cornered hat. There hung Bonaparte, too, the long-haired haggard general of Italy, his eyes sombre with prefigured destiny: and there was his island grave;—the dream and the fulfilment. Good store of sea-fights there was also; above all Paul Jones in the *Bonhomme Richard*: the smoke rolling courteously to leeward, that we might see him dealing thunderous wreck to the two hostile vessels, each twice as large as his own, and the reality of the scene corroborated by streaks of red paint leaping from the mouth of every gun. Suspended over the fire-place with the curling-tongs, were an Indian bow and arrows, and in the corners of the room stood New Zealand paddles and war-clubs quaintly carved. The model of a

ship in glass we variously estimated to be worth from a hundred to a thousand dollars, R. rather favoring the higher valuation, though never distinctly committing himself. Among these wonders, the only suspicious one was an Indian tomahawk, which had too much the peaceful look of a shingling-hatchet. Did any rarity enter the town, it gravitated naturally to these walls, to the very nail that waited to receive it, and where, the day after its accession, it seemed to have hung a lifetime.

“We always had a theory that R. was immensely rich (how could he possess so much and be otherwise?), and that he pursued his calling from an amiable eccentricity. He was a conscientious artist, and never submitted it to the choice of his victim whether he would be perfumed or not. Faithfully was the bottle shaken and the odoriferous mixture rubbed in, a fact redolent to the whole schoolroom in the afternoon. Sometimes the persuasive tonsor would impress one of the attendant volunteers, and reduce his poll to shoe-brush crispness, at cost of the reluctant nine-pence hoarded for Fresh Pond and the next half-holiday. So purely indigenous was our population then, that R. had a certain exotic charm, a kind of game flavor by being a Dutchman.”

The poet's first experience of school-life is thus graphically recalled in after years :

“Passing through some Massachusetts village, perhaps at a distance from any house, it may be in the midst of a piece of woods where four roads meet, one may sometimes even yet see a small square one-story building, whose use would not be long doubtful. It is summer, and the flickering shadows of forest-leaves dapple the roof of the little porch, whose door stands wide, and shows, hanging on either hand, rows of straw hats and bonnets that look as if they had done good service. As you pass the open windows, you hear whole platoons of high-pitched voices discharging words of two or three syllables with wonderful precision and unanimity. Then there is a pause and the voice of the officer in command is heard reproving some raw recruit whose vocal musket hung fire. Then the drill of the small infantry begins anew, but pauses again because some urchin — who agrees with Voltaire that the superfluous is a very necessary thing — insists on spelling ‘subtraction’ with an *s* too much.

“If you had the good fortune to be born and bred in the Bay State, your mind is thronged with half-sad, half-humorous recollections. The a-b abs of little voices long since hushed in the world, or

ringing now in the pulpit, at the bar, or in the Senate Chamber, come back to the ear of memory. You remember the high stool on which culprits used to be elevated with the tall paper fool's-cap on their heads, blushing to the ears; and you think with wonder how you have seen them since as men climbing the world's penance-stools of ambition without a blush, and gladly giving everything for life's caps and bells. And you have pleasanter memories of going after pond-lilies, of angling for horn-pouts, — that queer bat among the fishes, — of nutting, of walking over the creaking snow-crust in winter, when the warm breath of every household was curling up silently in the keen blue air. You wonder if life has any rewards more solid and permanent than the Spanish dollar that was hung around your neck to be restored again next day, and conclude sadly that it was but too true a prophecy and emblem of all worldly success. But your moralizing is broken short off by a rattle of feet and the pouring forth of the whole swarm, — the boys dancing and shouting, — the mere effervescence of the fixed air of youth and animal spirits uncorked, — the sedater girls in confidential twos and threes descanting secrets out of the mouth of one cape-bonnet into that of another. Times have changed since the jackets and trousers used to

draw up on one side of the road, and the petticoats on the other, to salute with bow and courtesy the white neck-cloth of the parson or the squire, if it chanced to pass during intermission."

After a brief experience in one of these district schools, the little fellow was sent to a somewhat more pretentious hall of learning. William Wells, a finely educated Englishman and a former member of the well-known Boston publishing house, Wells & Lilly, opened a boys' school in Cambridge, not far from the Elmwood parsonage, and it was here that the young poet received the greater part of his early education.

We must not forget, however, that from his very cradle he had been nurtured with old ballads and romances. Add to this the refining influence of his ideal home where the beautiful both in Nature and in Art was constantly before him, and we can better understand the rapid development of those —

"wild germs of higher birth  
Which in the poet's tropic heart bear flowers  
Whose fragrance fills the earth."

Like all boys he had the inevitable, though fortunately transitory passion in his case for "a life on the ocean wave." The maritime trade of Cam-

bridge at that time was "intrusted to a single Argo, the sloop Harvard which belonged to the College and made annual voyages to that vague Orient known as Down East, bringing back the wood that, in those days gave to winter life at Harvard a crackle and a cheerfulness, for the loss of which the greater warmth of anthracite hardly compensates.

"New England life, to be genuine, must have in it some sentiment of the sea,—it was this instinct that printed the device of the pine-tree on the old money and the old flag,—and these periodic ventures of the sloop Harvard made the old Viking fibre vibrate in the hearts of all the village boys. What a vista of mystery and adventure did her sailing open to us! With what pride did we hail her return! She was our scholiast upon Robinson Crusoe and the Mutiny of the Bounty. Her captain still lords it over our memories, the greatest sailor that ever sailed the seas, and we should not look at Sir John Franklin himself with such admiring interest as that with which we enhaloed some larger boy who had made a voyage in her and had come back without braces (*gallowses*, we called them) to his trousers, and squirting ostentatiously the juice of that weed which still gave him little private returns of something very like seasickness.

All our shingle vessels were shaped and rigged by her, who was our glass of naval fashion and our mould of aquatic form. We had a secret and wild delight in believing that she carried a gun, and imagined her sending grape and canister among the treacherous savages of Oldtown. Inspired by her were those first essays at navigation on the Winthrop duck-pond, of the plucky boy who was afterwards to serve two famous years before the mast.

“The greater part of what is now Cambridgeport was then (in the native dialect) a *huckleberry pasture*. Woods were not wanting on its outskirts, of pine, and oak, and maple, and the rarer tupelo with downward limbs. Its veins did not draw their blood from the quiet old heart of the village, but it had a distinct being of its own, and was rather a great caravansary than a suburb. The chief feature of the place was its inns, of which there were five, with vast barns and court-yards, which the railroad was to make as silent and deserted as the palaces of Nimrod.

“Great white-topped wagons, each drawn by double files of six or eight horses, with its dusty bucket swinging from the hinder axle, and its grim bull-dog trotting silent underneath, or in midsummer panting on the lofty perch beside the driver

(how elevated thither baffled conjecture), brought all the wares and products of the country to their mart and seaport in Boston. These filled the inn-yards or were ranged side by side under broad-roofed sheds, and far into the night the mirth of their lusty drivers clamored from the red-curtained bar-room, while the single lantern, swaying to and fro in the black tavern of the stables, made a Rembrandt of the group of ostlers and horses below. There were, besides the taverns, some huge square stores where groceries were sold, some houses, by whom or why inhabited was to us boys a problem, and on the edge of the marsh, a currier's shop, where at high tide, on a floating platform, men were always beating skins in a way to remind one of Don Quixote's fulling-mills."

And there were the two groceries "where E. & W. I. goods and country *prodooce* were sold with an energy mitigated by the quiet genius of the place, and where strings of urchins waited, each with a cent in hand, for the unweighed dates (thus giving an ordinary business transaction all the excitement of a lottery) and buying not only that cloying sweetness, but a dream also of Egypt, and palm-trees, and Arabs, in which vision a print of the Pyramids in our geography tyrannized like that taller thought of Cowper's."



And so the happy days of boyhood glided by, the school-life in Cambridge varied by a few months preparatory study at Mr. Ingraham's classical school in Boston where the bright lad was fitted for an entrance into Harvard College in his sixteenth year.

## CHAPTER III.

### LIFE AT HARVARD.

**I**N Lowell's fine poem to Oliver Wendell Holmes on his seventy-fifth birthday, he says :

“ Ten years my senior, when my name  
In Harvard's entrance book was writ,  
Her halls still echoed with the fame  
Of you her poet and her wit.

. . . . .

One air gave both their lease of breath ;  
The same paths lured our boyish feet ;  
One earth will hold us safe in death,  
With dust of saints and scholars sweet.

Our legends from one source were drawn,  
I scarce distinguish yours from mine,  
And don't we make the Gentiles yawn  
With ' You remembers ? ' o'er our wine !

If I with too senescent air,  
Invade your elder memory's pale,  
You snub me with a pitying ' Where  
Were you in the September Gale ? '

Both stared entranced at Lafayette,  
Saw Jackson dubbed with LL. D.  
What Cambridge saw not strikes us yet  
As scarcely worth one's while to see.”

Commencement Day at Harvard was one of the great events of the year to the young "Cantabrigians born under the shadow of the College walls."

"The year," says Holmes, "had nothing for us boys like 'the tents.' Tuesday night was to us like the evening before Agincourt. We heard the hammers late in the evening, we heard them early in the morning as we looked out of the west window to see if 'the tents were going to spread over as wide a surface as in other remembered years. The sun crawled slowly up in the sky, like a golden tortoise,—how long a day was then! At last the blare of a trumpet! The Governor was coming, guarded by his terrible light-horse troop, protected too by his faithful band of mounted truckmen from Boston, sturdy men on massive steeds in white frocks all, a noble show of broad shoulders and stout arms. . . . It was the end of August, you remember, and the peaches were ripe, and the early apples and pears, and chief among the fruits of the season, that bounteous one which a College poet thus celebrated in the year 1811:—

'The smaller melons go for each one's need,  
The children have them or they go to seed;  
But this great melon waits Commencement Day,  
Mounts the tall cart, to Cambridge takes its way;  
There, proud conclusion of its happy days,  
A graduate's palate murmurs forth its praise.'

“So sung Edward Everett, Senior Sophister aged seventeen.”

“Not least among the curiosities which the day brought together,” writes Lowell, “were some of the graduates, posthumous men, as it were, disentombed from country parishes and district schools, but perennial also, in whom freshly survived all the college jokes, and who had no intelligence later than their Senior year. These had gathered to eat the College dinner, and to get the Triennial Catalogue (their *libro d’oro*) referred to oftener than any volume but the Concordance. Aspiring men they were, certainly, but in a right, unworldly way ; this scholastic festival opening a peaceful path to the ambition which might else have devastated mankind with Prolusions on the Pentateuch, or Genealogies of the Dormouse Family. For since in the academic processions the classes are ranked in the order of their graduation, and he has the best chance at the dinner who has the fewest teeth to eat with, so, by degrees, there springs up a competition in longevity,—the prize contended for being the oldest surviving graduateship. This is an office, it is true, without emolument, but having certain advantages, nevertheless. The incumbent, if he come to Commencement, is a prodigious lion, and commonly gets a paragraph in

the newspaper once a year with the (fiftieth) last survivor of Washington's Life-Guard. If a clergyman, he is expected to ask a blessing and return thanks at the dinner, a function which he performs with centenarian longanimity, as if he reckoned the ordinary life of man to be fivescore years, and that a grace must be long to reach so far away as heaven. Accordingly this silent race is watched, on the course of the Catalogue, with an interest worthy of Newmarket; and as star after star rises in the galaxy of death, till one name is left alone, an oasis of life in the stellar desert, it grows solemn. The natural feeling is reversed, and it is the solitary life that becomes sad and monitory, the Stylites there on the lonely top of his century-pillar, who has heard the passing-bell of youth, love, friendship, hope, — of everything but immitigable eld."

Looking back upon his college days at Harvard, Lowell pays the following tribute to President Quincy :

"Almost everybody looks back regretfully to the days of some Consul Plancus. Never were eyes so bright, never had wine so much wit and good-fellowship in it, never were we ourselves so capable of the various great things we have never done. Nor is it merely the sunset of life that casts

such a ravishing light on the past, and makes the western windows of those homes of fancy we have left forever, tremble with a sentiment of such sweet regret. We set great store by what we had, and cannot have again, however indifferent in itself, and what is past is infinitely past. This is especially true of college life, when we first assume the titles without the responsibilities of manhood, and the President of our year is apt to become our Plancus very early. Popular or not while in office, an ex-president is always sure of enthusiastic cheers at every college festival. Mr. Quincy had many qualities calculated to win favor with the young—that one above all which is sure to do it, indomitable pluck. With him, the dignity was in the man, not in the office. He had some of those little oddities, too, which afford amusement without contempt, and which rather heighten than diminish personal attachment to superiors in station. His punctuality at prayers, and in dropping asleep there, his forgetfulness of names, his singular inability to make even the shortest off-hand speech to the students—all the more singular in a practised orator—his occasional absorption of mind, leading him to hand you his sand-box instead of the leave of absence he had just dried with it—the old-fashioned courtesy of his, ‘Sir, your servant,’ as he

bowed you out of his study — all tended to make him popular. He had also a little of what is somewhat contradictorily called dry humor, not without influence in his relations with the students. In taking leave of the graduating class, he was in the habit of paying them whatever honest compliment he could. Who, of a certain year which shall be nameless, will ever forget the gravity with which he assured them that they were ‘the *best-dressed* class that had passed through college during his administration?’ How sincerely kind he was, how considerate of youthful levity, will always be gratefully remembered by whoever had occasion to experience it. A visitor not long before his death found him burning some memoranda of college peccadilloes, lest they should ever rise up in judgment against the men eminent in Church and State who had been guilty of them. One great element of his popularity with the students was his *esprit de corps*. However strict in discipline, he was always on *our* side as respected the outside world. Of his efficiency, no higher testimony could be asked than that of his successor, Dr. Walker. Here also many reforms date from his time. He had that happiest combination for a wise vigor in the conduct of affairs, — he was a conservative with an open mind.”

Among the classmates of Lowell, were William W. Story, the sculptor and poet, Charles Devens, a general in the Civil War, and now a judge of the Supreme Court; the Rev. Rufus Ellis, Hon. George B. Loring; the late Professor Nathan Hale (Edward Everett Hale was in the class following); Prof. H. L. Eustis; Prof. W. P. Atkinson; and the Rev. J. I. T. Coolidge.

Although not remarkable for his rank in scholarship while at Harvard, Lowell was elected Class Poet, and his poem bears this unique dedication, "To the Class of 1838, some of whom he loves, none of whom he hates, this 'poem' is dedicated by their classmate."



## CHAPTER IV.

### EARLY MANHOOD.

AFTER his graduation at Harvard College, Lowell entered the Law School, and took his degree of LL. B. in 1840. He opened an office at No. 4 Court Street, in Boston, but the profession of law was little suited to his tastes, and he soon abandoned it for literature. "Are not our educations," he says, "commonly like a pile of books laid over a plant in a pot? The compressed nature struggles through at every crevice, but can never get the cramp and stunt out of it. We spend all our youth in building a vessel for our voyage of life, and set forth with streamers flying; but the moment we come nigh the great loadstone mountain of our proper destiny, out leap all our carefully driven bolts and nails, and we get many a mouthful of good salt brine, and many a buffet of the rough water of experience, before we secure the bare right to live." A story for the "Boston Miscellany," entitled "My First Client," was written by the young lawyer at this time, and just before his

twenty-second birthday he published a volume of poems, to which he gave the title "A Year's Life." Although many of the poems in this first book are discarded in after years in the author's "complete" collection, some of them have never been surpassed in beauty of thought and felicity of expression. "Irene," for instance, — "My Love," and "The Beggar," are poems that the world will never let die, and many passages from the sonnets published with these earlier songs, have already passed into household proverbs. The motto for this little book, *Ich habe gelebt und geliebt*, taken from Schiller, gives the true key-note of the young poet's inspiration. Despite the cold, disparaging criticism of Margaret Fuller in "The Dial," both imagery and music were the writer's own, and his distinctive originality was soon to receive a world-wide recognition. Before the publication of his next volume, Lowell, with his friend Robert Carter, an eccentric genius, launched upon the sea of periodical literature a new magazine called "The Pioneer." It was finely printed and illustrated, and numbered among its contributors Hawthorne, Whittier, Poe, and other writers who have since become famous; but the young editors, who were also the proprietors, had more literary talent than business experience, and after the pub-

lication of three numbers, "The Pioneer" was discontinued for want of patronage. It was, indeed, too far ahead of its age. The general reading public could not appreciate such incomparable stories as Hawthorne's "Hall of Fantasy," or the exquisite melody of a poem like "Lenore."

It is my good fortune to own one of these rare numbers of "The Pioneer," bound in an old time-worn volume with copies of the "Boston Miscellany." This latter periodical to which Lowell was a frequent contributor, was almost as short-lived as its predecessor. "The reason for this," writes Rev. Edward E. Hale, brother of Nathan Hale, Jr., the editor, "was that its publishers had no capital. They had to resort to the clap-trap of fashion plates and other engravings, in the hope of forcing an immediate sale upon persons, who caring for fashion plates, did not care for the literary character of the enterprise. It gave a happy escape pipe, however, for the high spirits of some of us who had just left college; and, through my brother's kindness, I was sometimes permitted to contribute to the journal."

In this number of "The Pioneer," which is before me as I write, is a most delightful essay upon "Song Writing," from which the following extracts are taken :

“The songs of a nation,” says Lowell, “are like wild flowers pressed, as it were, by chance, between the blood-stained pages of history. As if man’s heart had paused for a moment in its dusty march, and looked back, with a flutter of the pulse and a tearful smile, upon the simple peacefulness of happier and purer days, gathering some wayside blossom to remind it of childhood and home, amid the crash of battle or the din of the market. . . .

“The infinite sends its messages to us by untutored spirits, and the lips of little children, and the unboastful beauty of simple nature ; not with the sound of trumpet, and the tramp of mail-clad hosts. Simplicity and commonness are the proofs of Beauty’s divinity. Earnestly and beautifully touching is this eternity of simple feeling from age to age, — this trustfulness with which the heart flings forth to the wind its sybilline leaves to be gathered and cherished as oracles forever. The unwieldy current of life whirls and writhes and struggles muddily onward, and there in mid-current the snow-white lilies blow in unstained safety, generation after generation. The cloud-capt monuments of mighty kings and captains crumble into dust and mingle with the nameless ashes of those who reared them ; but we know perhaps the name

and even the color of the hair and eyes of some humble shepherd's mistress who brushed through the dew to meet her lover's kiss, when the rising sun glittered on the golden images that crowned the palace-roof of Semiramis. Fleets and navies are overwhelmed and forgotten, but some tiny, love-freighted argosy launched (like those of the Hindoo maidens) upon the stream of time in days now behind the horizon, floats down to us with its frail lamp yet burning. Theories for which great philosophers wore their hearts out, histories over which the eyes of wise men ached for weary years, creeds for which hundreds underwent an exulting martyrdom, poems which had once quickened the beating of the world's great heart, and the certainty of whose deathlessness had made death sweet to the poet, all these have smouldered to nothing, but some word of love, some outvent of sorrow which haply filled only one pair of eyes with tears, these seem to have become a part of earth's very life-blood. They live because those who wrote never thought whether they would live or not. . .

“A good song is as if the poet had pressed his heart against the paper, and that could have conveyed its hot, tumultuous throbbings to the reader. The low, musical rustle of the wind among the leaves is songlike, but the slow, unfolding of the

leaves and blossoms, and under them the conception and ripening of the golden fruit through long summer days of sunshine and of rain, are like the grander, but not more beautiful or eternal, offspring of poesy. The song-writer must take his place somewhere between the poet and the musician, and must form a distinct class by himself. The faculty of writing songs is certainly a peculiar one, and as perfect in its kind as that of writing epics. They can only be written by the poets; like the mistletoe they are slender and delicate, but they only grow on oaks. . . .

“Songs are scarcely amenable to the common law of criticism. If anything were needed to prove the utter foolishness of the assertion, that that only is good poetry which can be reduced to good prose, we might summon as witnesses the most perfect songs in our language. The best part of a song lies often not at all in the words, but in the metre perhaps, or the structure of the verse, in the wonderful melody which arose of itself from the feeling of the writer, and which unawares throws the heart into the same frame of thought.

. . . . .

“In a good song, the words seem to have given birth to the melody and the melody to the words. The strain of music seems to have wandered into

the poet's heart, and to have been the thread round which his thoughts have crystallized. . . .

“We hear men often enough speak of seeing God in the stars and the flowers, but they will never be truly religious till they learn to behold him in each other also, where he is most easily, yet most rarely discovered. But to have become blessed enough to find him in anything, is a sure pledge of finding him in all, and many times perhaps some snatch of artless melody floating over the land, as if under the random tutelage of the breeze, may have given the hint of its high calling to many a soul which else had lain torpid and imbruted. Great principles work out their fulfillment with the slightest and least regarded tools, and destiny may chance to speak to us in the smell of a buttercup or the music of the commonest air. . . .

“The true way of judging the value of any one of the arts is by measuring its aptness and power to advance the refinement, and sustain the natural dignity of mankind. Men may show rare genius in amusing or satirizing their fellow-beings, or in raising their wonder, or in giving them excuses for all manner of weakness by making them believe that, although their nature prompts them to be angels, they are truly no better than worms, — but

only to him will death come as a timely guide to a higher and more glorious sphere of action and duty, who has done somewhat, however little, to reveal to the soul its beauty and to awaken in it an aspiration towards what only our degradation forces us to call an ideal life. It is but a half-knowledge which sneers at *Utilitarianism*, as if that word may not have a spiritual as well as a material significance. He is indeed a traitor to his better nature who would persuade men that the use of anything is proportioned to the benefit it confers upon their animal part. If the spirit's hunger be not satisfied, the body will not be at ease, though it slumber in Sybaris and feast with Apicius. It is the soul that makes men rich or poor, and he who has given a nation a truer conception of beauty, which is the body of truth, as love is its spirit, has done more for its happiness and to secure its freedom, than if he had doubled its defences or its revenue. He who has taught a man to look kindly on a flower or an insect, has thereby made him sensible of the beauty of tenderness toward men, and rendered charity and loving kindness so much the more easy, and so much the more necessary to him. To make life more reverend in the eyes of the refined and educated, may be a noble ambition in the scholar, or the poet, but to reveal to the poor



and ignorant and degraded, those divine arms of the eternal beauty which encircle them lovingly by day and night, to teach them that they also are children of one Father, and the nearer haply to his heart for the very want and wretchedness which half-persuaded them they were orphan and forgotten, this, truly, is the task of one who is greater than the poet or the scholar, namely, a true man, — and this belongs to the song-writer.”

In this same number of “*The Pioneer*” is a long notice of “*Poems on Slavery*,” by Prof. Longfellow ; and after this lapse of more than forty years it is interesting to read such prophetic criticisms as the following :

“Such a man as this, so well known as a polished scholar of general literature, so always welcome to every fireside as a poet whose muse has never in any way spotted the virgin white of her purity, will find a ready hearing, when he comes as a pleader on either side of a vexed question, with many to whom all others would be resolutely deaf. . . .

“The sentiment of anti-slavery is spreading so fast and so far over the whole land, that its opponents are rapidly dwindling into a minority. . . .

“There, for instance, is William Lloyd Garrison, the half-inspired Luther of this reform, a man too

remarkable to be appreciated in his generation, but whom the future will recognize as a great and wonderful spirit. There, too, is Whittier, the fiery Kœner of this spiritual warfare, who, Scævola-like has sacrificed on the altar of duty, that right hand which might have made him acknowledged as the most passionate lyricist of his time. There is the tenderly-loving Maria Child, the author of that dear book 'Philothea,' a woman of genius, who lives with humble content in the intellectual Coventry to which her conscientiousness has banished her—a fate the hardest for genius to bear. Nor ought the gentle spirit of Follen, a lion with a lamb's heart, to be forgotten, whose fiery fate, from which the mind turns horror-stricken, was perhaps to his mild nature less dreadful than that stake and fagot of public opinion, in dragging him to which many whom he loved were not inactive, for silence in such times is action. And Channing, a man great and original in perceiving, elucidating and defending those moral truths which others were the first to discover."

The anti-slavery movement had already begun to enlist the warmest sympathies of young Lowell's earnest, upright nature. He did not, however, desire extreme measures, but hoped that slavery might be abolished in a legal, rational way. There was

also another strong influence at this time that was helping to mould the poet's character. I refer to the doctrines of the Transcendentalists that were throwing a new and more spiritual light upon current thought and literature.

"To be young," writes Lowell, "is surely the best, if the most precarious, gift of life ; yet there are some of us who would hardly consent to be young again, if it were at the cost of our recollection of Mr. Emerson's first lectures during the consulate of Van Buren. We used to walk in from the country to the Masonic Temple (I think it was), through the crisp winter night, and listen to that thrilling voice of his, so charged with subtle meaning and subtle music, as shipwrecked men on a raft to the hail of a ship that came with un-hoped-for food and rescue. Cynics might say what they liked. Did our imaginations transfigure dry remainder-biscuit into ambrosia ? At any rate, he brought us life, which, on the whole, is no bad thing. Was it all transcendentalism ? magic-lantern pictures on mist ? As you will. Those then were just what we wanted. But it was not so. The delight and the benefit were that he put us in communication with a larger style of thought, sharpened our wits with more pungent phrase, gave us ravishing glimpses of an ideal under the

dry husk of our New England : made us conscious of the supreme and everlasting originality of whatever bit of soul might be in any of us ; freed us, in short, from the stocks of prose in which we had sat so long that we had grown well-nigh contented in our cramps. And who that saw the audience will ever forget it, where every one still capable of fire, or longing to renew in them the half-forgotten sense of it, was gathered ? Those faces, young and old, agleam with pale intellectual light, eager with pleased attention, flash upon me once more from the deep recesses of the years with an exquisite pathos. Ah, beautiful young eyes, brimming with love and hope, wholly banished now in that other world we call the Past, or peering doubtfully through the pensive gloaming of memory, your light impoverishes these cheaper days. I hear again that rustle of sensation, as they turned to exchange glances over some pithier thought, some keener flash of that humor which always played about the horizon of his mind like heat-lightning, and it seems now like the sad whisper of the autumn leaves that are whirling around me.

. . . . .

“To some of us that long-past experience remains as the most marvellous and fruitful we have ever had. Emerson awakened us, saved us from the

body of this death. It is the sound of the trumpet that the young soul longs for, careless what breath may fill it. Sidney heard it, in the ballad of 'Chevy Chase,' and we in Emerson. Nor did it blow retreat, but called to us with assurance of victory. Did they say he was disconnected? So were the stars, that seemed larger to our eyes, still keen with that excitement, as we walked homeward with prouder stride over the creaking snow. And were they not knit together by a higher logic than our mere sense could master? Were we enthusiasts? I hope and believe we were, and am thankful to the man who made us worth something for once in our lives. If asked what was left? what we carried home? we should not have been careful for an answer. It would have been enough if we had said that something beautiful had passed that way."

Says an appreciative friend of the poet and reformer :

"We often forget that it is now nearly half a century that Mr. Lowell has been in society, or on the larger stage of events, a conspicuous figure in our public life. His wonderful freshness and variety of talent have so accustomed us to think of him as a young man, that we do not yield readily to the reminder when we are called upon to remember

that Mr. Lowell won his spurs as a Radical forty years ago. It is that many years since he protested against the mob belief that 'President Polk is our country,' when the battle flags of the Mexican war were unfurled.

"Almost before the present active generation began to live, Mr. Lowell was one of those young and generous spirits who were not afraid to step out of society to the side of the slave. We have lived so far beyond that time that we can hardly appreciate the courage involved in the act. But forty years ago society looked upon young men like Edmund Quincy, James Russell Lowell and Wendell Phillips as taking themselves outside of its protection when they put on the badge of abolition. Looking about us to-day, reading in the papers of the promotion of colored soldiers in the United States Army, it seems impossible to believe that even in Boston there were men who openly expressed disgust at the spectacle of 'gentlemen' like Quincy, Lowell and Phillips associating themselves with the insulting visionaries who said that the black man ought to have a chance to be the equal of the white man, that slavery was an abomination, and that American liberty was a humbug so long as the black man remained a slave upon our soil. It was all very well, society said, for the humbly-born

Garrison, the Quaker Whittier, or the politician Sumner to agitate; it seemed logical that they should agitate; but why should men for whom wood was hewn and water borne, men trained to elegant letters, take up their levelling doctrines? Society was grieved, it was disgusted; it must solemnly warn them that if they interfered with trade and its prospective profits, they must be prepared to incur an even more severe penalty than its frown.

“The Church shut its doors in the face of freedom. Edmund Quincy was compelled to hold some of his abolition meetings out of doors; for when public halls were closed against him, no congregation that desired to grow dared open its church to him, dared contemplate the consequences attendant on abolition preached from its pulpit. Society’s frown may have saddened the gentle and humanity-loving Quincy. He grieved for society, not for himself. It called up the fighting fire in Lowell and Phillips, and the indignant poet never rose to higher strains than when he sang the sure though delayed triumph of justice, or smote the cowardice that dared not be right with two or three, when he told the world that the scaffold swayed the future, and in a thousand ways showed his manly intolerance of sham, however robed in most respectable precedents.

One cannot but apply to Mr. Lowell the words in which he addressed Quincy :

“ His soul would not conspire  
With selfish men to soothe the mob’s desire,  
Veiling with garlands Moloch’s bloody stone ;  
The high-bred instincts of a better day  
Ruled in his blood.”



## CHAPTER V.

### MARRIAGE AND EARLY PUBLICATIONS.

ON the twenty-sixth of December, 1844, Lowell was married to Miss Maria White of Watertown, to whom many of his most beautiful songs and sonnets had already been inscribed. "Irene" and "My Love" give one a vivid pen-picture of the lovely, saintly spirit that inspired the pen of the young poet, and what love poem could be more exquisitely expressed than the following :

" Mary, since first I knew thee, to this hour  
My love hath deepened with my wiser sense,  
Of what in Woman is to reverence ;  
Thy clear heart, fresh as e'er was forest flower,  
Still opens more to me its beauteous dower ; —  
But let praise hush, — Love asks no evidence  
To prove itself well placed ; we know not whence  
It gleams the straws that thatch its humble bower :  
We can but say we found it in the heart,  
Spring of all sweetest thoughts, arch foe of blame,  
Sower of flowers in the dusty mart,  
Pure vestal of the poet's holy flame, —  
This is enough, and we have done our part  
If we but keep it spotless as it came."

It is hard to make a selection from so many of the beautiful poems inspired at this time by the new joy that had entered into the poet's life, but the following sonnet shows how truly he recognized the source of this fresh inspiration :

“What were I, Love, if I were stripped of thee,  
If thine eyes shut me out whereby I live,  
Thou, who unto my calmer soul dost give  
Knowledge, and Truth, and holy Mystery,  
Wherein Truth mainly lies for those who see  
Beyond the earthly and the fugitive,  
Who in the grandeur of the soul believe,  
And only in the Infinite are free?  
Without thee I were naked, bleak, and bare  
As yon dead cedar on the sea-cliff's brow;  
And Nature's teachings, which come to me now  
Common and beautiful as light and air,  
Would be as fruitless as a stream which still  
Slips through the wheel of some old ruined mill.”

To have known and loved a noble, beautiful woman like Maria White Lowell was in itself “a liberal education,” and those happy years of wedded life in the peaceful home at Elmwood seemed ideally perfect. The old halls began to ring with the music of children's voices, but the shadow of the dread Death Angel was hovering near. Little Blanche to whose “ever fresh and happy memory” the second volume of “Poems” is

“reverently dedicated,” was soon to leave them for the “upper fold”; and most tenderly does the stricken mother strive to comfort another breaking heart when she writes:

“After our child’s untroubled breath  
Up to the Father took its way,  
And on our home the shade of Death  
Like a long twilight haunting lay,

And friends came round, with us to weep  
Her little spirit’s swift remove,  
The story of the Alpine sheep  
Was told to us by one we love.

They in the valley’s sheltering care  
Soon crop the meadow’s tender prime,  
And when the sod grows brown and bare,  
The shepherd strives to make them climb

To airy shelves of pasture green,  
That hang along the mountain’s side,  
Where grass and flowers together lean  
And down through mist the sunbeams slide.

But nought can tempt the timid things  
The steep and rugged paths to try,  
Though sweet the shepherd calls and sings,  
And seared below the pastures lie,

Till in his arms their lambs he takes,  
Along the dizzy verge to go;  
Then, heedless of the rifts and breaks,  
They follow on o’er rock and snow.

And in those pastures, lifted fair,  
More dewy-soft than lowland mead,  
The shepherd drops his tender care  
And sheep and lambs together feed.

This parable, by Nature breathed,  
Blew on me as the south wind free  
O'er frozen brooks, that flow unsheathed  
From icy thralldom to the sea.

A blissful vision, through the night,  
Would all my happy senses sway,  
Of the good Shepherd on the height,  
Or climbing up the starry way,

Holding our little lamb asleep, —  
While, like the murmur of the sea,  
Sounded that voice along the deep,  
Saying, ' Arise and follow me ! ' ”

All the flock, save little Mabel, were taken to  
“ those heavenly pastures, lifted fair ” ; and a subdued strain — a pathetic minor chord — runs now through the poet's verse :—

“ I thought our love at full, but I did err ;  
Joy's wreath drooped o'er mine eyes ; I could not see  
That sorrow in our happy world must be  
Love's deepest spokesman and interpreter. ”

Of the poems written at this time, “ The Changeling,” “ She came and went,” “ After the Burial,” and “ The First Snow-Fall ” have come like a benediction to many sorrowing hearts. From the latter we cannot refrain quoting a few stanzas :—

"I stood and watched by the window  
 The noiseless work of the sky,  
 And the sudden flurries of snow-birds  
 Like brown leaves whirling by.

I thought of a mound in sweet Auburn  
 Where a little headstone stood;  
 How the flakes were folding it gently  
 As did robins the babes in the wood.

Up spoke our own little Mabel,  
 Saying, 'Father, who makes it snow?'  
 And I told of the good All-father  
 Who cares for us here below.

Again I looked at the snow-fall,  
 And thought of the leaden sky  
 That arched o'er our first great sorrow,  
 When that mound was heaped so high.

I remembered the gradual patience  
 That fell from that cloud like snow,  
 Flake by flake, healing and hiding  
 The scar of our deep-plunged woe.

And again to the child I whispered,  
 'The snow that husheth all,  
 Darling, the merciful Father  
 Alone can make it fall!'

Then, with eyes that saw not, I kissed her;  
 And she, kissing back, could not know  
 That *my* kiss was given to her sister  
 Folded close under deepening snow."

Writes Longfellow in his diary of May 29, 1846 :  
 "Called to see Lowell this morning ; and climbed

to his celestial study, with its pleasant prospects through the small square windows, and its ceiling so low you can touch it with your hand. Read Donne's poems, while he went down to feed his hens and chickens. . . . We then discoursed upon Abolitionists for half an hour. He is very ardent on this topic."

On June 8, of the same year, Longfellow adds : "Got back at tea time and found Lowell waiting. He says his heart sinks within him at the times being so out of joint."

And again a month later, he adds :

"Sumner passed last night with us and is to stay till Monday. . . . At noon we walked to Lowell's. He had gone to the anti-slavery picnic in Dedham. But we saw his gentle wife, who, I fear, is not long of this world. Speaking of the Abolitionists, she said, 'They do not modulate their words and voices. They are like people who live with the deaf, or hear water-falls, and whose voices become high and harsh.' "

Referring to the warm friendship between Longfellow and her husband, Mrs. Lowell once wrote :

"I have never seen such a beautiful friendship between men of such distinct personalities, though closely linked together by mutual tastes and affections. They criticise and praise each other's per-

formances with a frankness not to be surpassed, and seem to have attained that happy height of faith where no misunderstanding, no jealousy, no reserve, exists."

On the twenty-second of December, 1847, Longfellow notes the publication of Lowell's new volume of Poems, and spends the evening of the twenty-fourth in reading them. "Some of them," he says, "are very striking, often soaring into the sublime; for example, 'To the Past,' 'On the Present Crisis,' and 'Extreme Unction.'"

The presentation copy of this volume to Charles Sumner is in the Sumner Collection at the Harvard College Library — "with the author's cordial esteem, Xmas, 1847." It contains thirty-eight poems, including "Anti-Texas," "On the Capture of Certain Fugitive Slaves near Washington," and other anti-slavery stanzas which won great popularity among the Abolitionists.

March 22, 1848, Longfellow writes: "Lowell passed the evening with us. He has half-finished his *Fable for Critics*. He says he never means to write any more poetry — at least for many years; he 'cannot write slowly enough.'"

And it would indeed seem as if the poet scarcely knew how to shake off the spirit of rhyme that had taken possession of him. Title page, preface,

and even the long "preliminary note" to this "Fable for Critics" are all in rhyming measure, though clothed in prose, and the whole little book is "as full of puns," as Underwood expresses it, "as a pudding of plums."

I have a copy of the first "anonymous" edition — which is now quite rare — "set forth in October, the twenty-first day, in the year '48 ; G. P. Putnam, Broadway."

The modest, drab-colored little book looks as demure as a Quakeress among its gilt-edged companions, but the brilliant sparkle of wit that flashes forth from every page at once transfigures the plain "anonymous" face with the unmistakable stamp of genius. The author preludes :

"Having scrawled at full galop (as far as that goes) in a style that is neither good verse nor bad prose, and being a person that nobody knows, some people will say I am rather more free with my readers than it is becoming to be, that I seem to expect them to wait on my leisure in following wherever I wander at pleasure, that, in short, I take more than a young author's lawful ease, and laugh in a queer way so like Mephistopheles, that the public will doubt, as they grope through my rhythm, if in truth I am making fun *at* them or *with* them."



The Fable has, in truth, a "sting in its tail," but all the criticisms are so good-naturedly humorous, that only a weak mind could take offence at the happy *jeu d'esprit* — as the writer himself says "none but an owl would feel sore at a rub from a jester who tells you, without any subterfuge, that he sits in Diogenes' tub."

It is especially interesting to read the poet's criticism upon himself :

"There is Lowell, who's striving Parnassus to climb  
With a whole bale of *isms* tied together with rhyme,  
He might get on alone, spite of brambles and boulders,  
But he can't with that bundle he has on his shoulders,  
The top of the hill he will ne'er come nigh reaching  
Till he learns the distinction 'twixt singing and preaching;  
His lyre has some chords that would ring pretty well,  
But he'd rather by half make a drum of the shell,  
And rattle away till he's old as Methusalem,  
At the head of a march to the last new Jerusalem."

When he comes to speak of Longfellow, the critic's "steel becomes a swan's quill" :

"Who — but hey-day! What's this? Messieurs Matthews and  
Poe

You mustn't fling mud-balls at Longfellow so,  
Does it make a man worse that his character's such  
As to make his friends love him (as you think) too much?  
Why, there is not a bard at this moment alive  
More willing than he that his fellows should thrive;  
While you are abusing him thus, even now

He would help either one of you out of a slough ;  
You may say that he's smooth and all that till you're hoarse,  
But remember that elegance also is force ;  
After polishing granite as much as you will,  
The heart keeps its tough old persistency still ;  
Deduct all you can that still keeps you at bay, —  
Why, he'll live till men weary of Collins and Gray ;  
I'm not over-fond of Greek metres in English,  
To me rhyme's a gain, so it be not too jinglish,  
And your modern hexameter verses are no more  
Like Greek ones than sleek Mr. Pope is like Homer ;  
As the roar of the sea to the coo of a pigeon is,  
So, compared to your moderns, sounds old Melesigenes ;  
I may be too partial, the reason, perhaps, o't is  
That I've heard the old blind man recite his own rhapsodies,  
And my ear with that music inpregnate may be,  
Like the poor exiled shell with the soul of the sea,  
Or, as one can't bear Strauss when his nature is cloven  
To its deeps within deeps by the stroke of Beethoven ;  
But, set that aside, and 'tis truth that I speak,  
Had Theocritus written in English, not Greek,  
I believe that his exquisite sense would scarce change a line  
In that rare, tender, virgin-like pastoral Evangeline.  
That's not ancient nor modern, its place is apart  
Where time has no sway, in the realm of pure Art,  
'Tis a shrine of retreat from Earth's hubbub and strife  
As quiet and chaste as the author's own life."

On November 10 of that same year, [1848],  
Longfellow writes :

"Lowell passed the evening with us. His  
'Fable for Critics' is thought by all to be very

witty. His Biglow poems will soon be out, and also a Christmas poem ; making three books this autumn."

The Christmas Poem to which Longfellow refers is doubtless "The Vision of Sir Launfal," which was written in about forty-eight hours — during which time the poet scarcely ate or slept. It seems throughout like an inspired poem — a wonderful improvisation — as prefigured by the opening stanzas :

"Over his keys the musing organist,  
Beginning doubtfully and far away,  
First lets his fingers wander as they list,  
And builds a bridge from Dreamland for his lay :  
Then, as the touch of his loved instrument  
Gives hope and fervor, nearer draws his theme,  
First guessed by faint auroral flashes sent  
Along the wavering vista of his dream."

I doubt if there is another poem in our language so dear to the popular heart as this. How the musical words and majestic thoughts weave themselves together! —

"Whether we look or whether we listen  
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten ;  
Every clod feels a stir of might,  
An instinct within it that reaches and towers,  
And, groping blindly above it for light,  
Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers."

The contrasted pictures of summer and winter that form the preludes to the two parts of the poem, are inimitable in their magic word painting; and the high moral purpose of the exquisite allegory shows the true and enduring source of Lowell's poetical inspiration, the deep religious instinct united to a fervent sincere love for humanity that runs like a silver thread through all his writings :

“The voice that was calmer than silence said,

‘So it is I, be not afraid.

In many climes, without avail,

Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;

Behold it is here, — this cup which thou

Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;

This crust is my body broken for thee,

This water His blood that died on the tree;

The Holy Supper is kept, indeed;

In whatso we share with another's need;

Not what we give but what we share, —

For the gift without the giver is bare;

Who gives himself with his alms feeds three, —

Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me.”

Says an appreciative critic on the other side of the water :—

“There is one clear note running through the whole of Lowell's utterances which makes them fresh as with the sea air. It is the note of moral supremacy; ‘that moral supremacy is the only one

that leaves monuments and not ruins behind it' — that 'great mottoes of the race are moral not intellectual, and their force lies ready to the use of the poorest and weakest of us all ; that 'no man without intense faith in something can ever be in earnest' — that 'in *act*, a right ambition is to be a man amongst men, not a humbug amongst humbugs — and in *word* 'to give the true coin of speech, never the highly ornamental promise to pay — token of insolvency,' ”

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BIGLOW PAPERS. — FIRST SERIES.

IT was in the summer of 1846, when the Mexican War was agitating our country, that a letter appeared in the "Boston Courier," purporting to come from a certain Ezekial Biglow, and enclosing a poem in the Yankee dialect, written by his son Hosea. When Charles Sumner saw this first "Biglow" poem, he exclaimed to a friend, "This Yankee poet has the true spirit. He puts the case admirably. I wish, however, he could have used good English!"

The abolitionists rightly feared that the war was waged to obtain new territory for the extension of slavery, and Hosea with outspoken frankness declares :

"Ez fer war, I call it murder, —  
There you hev it plain and flat;  
I don't want to go no further  
Than my Testymet fer that.

. . . . .

"Wut's the use o' meetin'-goin'  
Every Sabbath, wet or dry,  
Ef it's right to go a-mowin'

Feller-men like oats and rye?  
I dunno but wut it's pooty  
Trainin' round in bobtail coats,—  
But it's cur'us Christian dooty  
This ere cuttin' folks's throats.

"They may talk o' Freedom's airy  
Till they're pupple in the face,—  
It's a grand gret cemetery  
Fer the barthrights of our race;  
They jest want this Californy  
So's to lug new slave-states in  
To abuse ye an' to scorn ye,  
An' to plunder ye like sin.

. . . . .

"Clang the bells in every steeple,  
Call all true men to disown  
The tradoochers of our people,  
The enslavers o' their own;  
Let our dear old Bay State proudly  
Put the trumpet to her mouth,  
Let her ring this messidge loudly  
In the ears of all the South:—

"I'll return ye good for evil  
Much ez we frail mortils can,  
But I wun't go help the Devil  
Makin' man the cus o' man;  
Call me coward, call me traitor,  
Jest as suits your mean idees,—  
Here I stand a tyrant-hater,  
An' the friend o' God an' Peace!"

Hosea's poems, each furnished with preface and notes by an imaginary Parson Wilbur, now became a regular feature of the "Courier," and the reading public were delighted and mystified at once, by this unique politician whose homely dialect and jingling rhymes concealed so much keen wit and biting sarcasm. A Mexican war recruit, "Birdof-fredom Sawin," gives his experience in "sogering" which —

— "ain't a mite like our October trainin',  
A chap could clear right out from there ef't only looked like rainin'.

. . . . .

This sort o' thing ain't *jest* like thet, — I wish thet I wuz funder, —  
Ninepunce a day fur killin' folks comes kind o' low fer murder." —

. . . . .

"Wal, it beats all how big I felt hoorawing in ole Funnel  
Wen Mister Bolles he gin the sword to our Leftenant Cunnle  
(It's Mister Secondary Bolles, thet writ the prize peace essay;  
That's why he didn't 'list himself along o' us I dessay);  
An' Rantoul, tu, talked pooty loud, but don't put *his* foot in it  
Coz human life's so sacred thet he's principled ag'in it, —  
Though I myself can't rightly see it's any wus achokin' on 'em,  
Than puttin' bullets thru their lights, or with a baynet pokin' on 'em.  
How dreffle slick he reeled it off (like Blitz at our lyceum  
Ahauling ribbins from his chops so quick you skeercely see 'em)  
About the Anglo-Saxon race (an' saxons would be handy  
To du the buryin' down here upon the Rio Grandy),



About our patriotic pas an' our star-spangled banner  
Our country's bird a-lookin' on an' singin' out hosanner,  
An' how he (Mister B. himself) wuz happy fer Ameriky, —  
I felt, as Sister Patience sez, a leetle mite hystericky."

And so the rollicking rhyme runs on with numerous "hits" upon the politicians of the day, and a layer of sound common sense and strong moral purpose beneath all the bright flashes of wit. "What Mr. Robinson Thinks" came next, and caught the public ear immediately, much to the annoyance of Mr. Robinson himself, who, although on the wrong side of a great moral question, was a quiet, refined man of much culture and ability. Even the children in the streets caught the ludicrous refrain, —

"John P.  
Robinson he  
Sez he wunt vote fer Guvener B."

and to escape the sound of his own name it is said that he finally went abroad. He had scarcely landed at Liverpool, however, before he heard a child's voice singing the same odious words, and even upon the shores of the Mediterranean his ears were again accosted with, —

"John P.  
Robinson he  
Sez they didn't know everythin' down in Judee!"

At the same time that this poem appears in the "Boston Courier" the imaginary Parson Wilbur writes as follows to Mr. Buckingham, the editor :

JAALEM, Nov. 4, 1847.

RESPECTED SIR :

Calling at the post-office this morning, our worthy and efficient post-master offered for my perusal a paragraph in the "Boston Morning Post," of the third instant, wherein certain effusions of the pastoral muse are attributed to the pen of Mr. James Russell Lowell.

For aught I know or can affirm to the contrary, this Mr. Lowell may be a very deserving person and a youth of parts (though I have seen verses of his which I could never rightly understand) ; and if he be such, he, I am certain, as well as I, would be free from any proclivity to appropriate to himself whatever of credit (or discredit) may honestly belong to another. I am confident, that, in penning these few lines, I am only forestalling a disclaimer from that young gentleman, whose silence hitherto, when rumor pointed to himward, has excited in my bosom mingled emotions of sorrow and surprise. Well may my young parishioner, Mr. Biglow, exclaim with the poet, '*Sic vos non vobis*,' etc. ; though, in saying this, I would not convey the impression that he is a proficient in the Latin tongue, — the tongue, I might add, of a Horace and a Tully.

Mr. B. does not employ his pen, I can safely say, for any lucre of worldly gain, or to be exalted by the carnal plaudits of men, *digito monstrari*, etc. He does not wait upon Providence for mercies, and in his heart mean *merces*. But I should esteem myself as verily deficient in my duty (who am his friend and in some unworthy sort his spiritual *Fidus Achates*, etc.) if I did not step forward to claim for him whatever measure of applause might be assigned to him by the judicious.

From this it appears that Hosea's Muse was not wholly unrecognized by the keen-scented public, but for various reasons Lowell preferred to remain "incognito," as far as possible, and Hosea again makes his appearance in a burlesque version of a political speech, beginning :

"No? Hez he? He hain't, though! Wut? voted ag'in him?  
Ef the bird of our country could ketch him, she'd skin him;  
It seems though I see her, with wrath in each quill,  
Like a chancery lawyer, afilen' her bill,  
An' grindin' her talents ez sharp ez all nater,  
To pounce like a writ on the back of the traitor.  
Forgive me, my friends, ef I seem to be het,  
But a crisis like this must with vigor be met;  
Wen an Arnold the star-spangled banner bestains  
Holl Fourth o' Julys seem to bile in my veins."

The occasion for this patriotic outburst was the refusal of Dr. Palfrey the historian (then a member of Congress) to vote for Mr. Winthrop, the Whig candidate for speaker, and where will you find more spicy irony than in the following lines:—

"An', ez fer this Palfrey, we thought wen we'd gut him in  
He'd go kindly in wutever harness we put him in;  
Supposin' we *did* know thet he wuz a peace man?  
Doos he think he can be Uncle Sammle's policeman,  
An' wen Sam gets tipsy an' kicks up a riot,  
Lead him off to the lockup to snooze till he's quiet?"

My, the war is a war thet true paytriots can bear, ef  
 It leads to the fat promised land of a tayriff ;  
*We* don't go an' fight it, nor ain't to be driv on,  
 Nor Demmercrats nuther, thet hev wut to live on ;  
 Ef it ain't jest the thing thet's well pleasin' to God,  
 It makes us thought highly on elsewhere abroad ;  
 The Rooshian black eagle looks blue in his eerie  
 An' shakes both his heads when he hears of Monteery."

And so the witty poem runs on for two hundred lines or more. To this effusion of Hosea's genius the parson appends a voluminous note from which we cannot resist quoting the following wise remarks : —

"In reading Congressional debates, I have fancied that after the subsidence of those painful buzzings in the brain which result from such exercises, I detected a slender residuum of valuable information. I made the discovery that *nothing* takes longer in the saying than anything else, for as *ex nihilo nihil fit*, so from one polypus *nothing* any number of similar ones may be produced. I would recommend to the attention of *vivâ voce* debaters and controversialists the admirable example of the monk Copres, who, in the fourth century, stood for half an hour in the midst of a great fire, and thereby silenced a Manichean antagonist who had less of the salamander in him. As for those who quarrel in print, I have no concern

with them here, since the eyelids are a divinely granted shield against all such. Moreover, I have observed in many modern books that the printed portion is becoming gradually smaller, and the number of blank or fly leaves (as they are called) greater. Should this fortunate tendency of literature continue, books will grow more valuable from year to year, and the whole Serbonian bog yield to the advances of firm arable land."

Hosea's next production is "A Debate in the Sennit, sot to a Nusry Rhyme," which the parson introduces as follows :

"Mr. Calhoun, who is made the chief speaker in this burlesque, seems to think that the light of the nineteenth century is to be put out as soon as he tinkles his little cow-bell curfew. Whenever slavery is touched, he sets up his scarecrow of dissolving the Union. This may do for the North, but I should conjecture that something more than a pumpkin-lantern is required to scare manifest and irretrievable Destiny out of her path. Mr. Calhoun cannot let go the apron-string of the Past.

. . . . .

"It will not do for us to hide our faces in her lap, whenever the strange Future holds out her arms and asks us to come to her."

As Hosea puts it, in one of his stanzas :—

“‘The slavery question ain’t no ways bewilderin.’

North and South hev one int’rest, it’s plain to a glance;  
No’thern men, like us patriarchs, don’t sell their childrin,

But they *du* sell themselves, ef they git a good chance,’

Sez John C. Calhoun, sez he; —

Sez Atherton here,

‘ This is gittin’ severe, \*

I wish I could dive like a loon,’ sez he.”

“The Pious Editor’s Creed” is prefaced by certain delightful extracts from one of Parson Wilbur’s sermons. “See,” he says, “what a pulpit the editor mounts daily, sometimes with a congregation of fifty thousand within reach of his voice, and never so much as a nodder, even, among them! And from what a Bible can he choose his text — a Bible which needs no translation, and which no priestcraft can shut and clasp from laity — the open volume of the world, upon which, with a pen of sunshine or destroying fire, the inspired Present is even now writing the annals of God! Methinks the editor who should understand his calling, and be equal thereto, would truly deserve that title which Homer bestows upon princes. He would be the Moses of our nineteenth century; and whereas the old Sinai, silent now, is but a common mountain stared at by the elegant tourist, and crawled over by the hammering geologist, he must find his tables of the new law here among factories

and cities in this Wilderness of Sin (Numbers xxxiii. 12) called Progress of Civilization, and be the captain of our Exodus into the Canaan of a truer social order. . . . Wonderful to him that sees it rightly, is the newspaper. . . . Hither, to my obscure corner, by wind or steam, on horse-back or dromedary-back, in the pouch of the Indian runner, or clicking over the magnetic wires, troop all the famous performers from the four quarters of the globe. Looked at from a point of criticism, tiny puppets they seem all, as the editor sets up his booth upon my desk and officiates as showman. . . . Think of it ; for three dollars a year I buy a season to this great Globe Theatre, for which God would write the dramas (only that we like farces, spectacles, and the tragedies of Apollyon better), whose scene-shifter is Time, and whose curtain is rung down by Death.

“Such thoughts will occur to me sometimes as I am tearing off the wrapper of my newspaper. Then suddenly that otherwise too often vacant sheet becomes invested for me with a strange kind of awe. Look ! deaths and marriages, notices of inventions, discoveries, and books, lists of promotions, of killed, wounded, and missing, news of fires, accidents, of sudden wealth and as sudden poverty ;— I hold in my hand the ends of myriad invisible electric con-

ductors, along which tremble the joys, sorrows, wrongs, triumphs, hopes, and despairs of as many men and women everywhere. So that upon that mood of mind which seems to isolate me from mankind as a spectator of their puppet-pranks, another supervenes, in which I feel that I, too, unknown and unheard of, am yet of some import to my fellows. For through my newspaper here, do not families take pains to send me, an entire stranger, news of a death among them? Are not here two who would have me know of their marriage? And, strangest of all, is not this singular person anxious to have me informed that he has received a fresh supply of Dimitry Bruisgins? But to none of us does the Present continue miraculous (even if for a moment discerned as such). We glance carelessly at the sunrise, and get used to Orion and the Pleiades. The wonder wears off, and to-morrow this sheet, in which a vision was let down to me from Heaven, shall be the wrappage to a bar of soap or the platter for a beggar's broken victuals." -

These extracts show the quaint, delicious flavor of Parson Wilbur's "Notes" — indeed, one great charm of the Biglow Papers consists in these wise, original, and quietly-humorous interludes. When the death of the good parson is announced in the second volume of the Biglow Papers, we feel as if



we had lost a personal friend, so real and vivid a personage has the Rev. Homer Wilbur become to the reader.

A burlesque of General Taylor's letter accepting the nomination for the presidency, and two more letters from "Birdofredum Sawin" conclude the first series of the Biglow Papers which were immediately gathered into a volume, and published by George Nichols of Cambridge. The staid "New Englander" in its February issue of 1849 deigned(!) to criticise the new book, as follows :—

"It may be questionable in the judgment of some readers of the New Englander, whether the serious and practical tone of our grave quarterly will permit us to occupy its pages with what we feel disposed to say concerning young Hosea's first appearance as author and Parson Wilbur's no less noteworthy first appearance as editor. It may surprise, and possibly offend, some very good people, that we take *any* notice of a book which one class of critics will regard only as a foolish attempt to make people laugh, and which another class will be sure to denounce as full of the most wicked and diabolical mockery. And yet, though we *have* laughed heartily—almost dangerously—over some passages in these 'Biglow Papers,' it is by no means with the desire to make the readers of this journal

laugh, not even to amuse them, that we undertake to say something about the spirit and contents of this singular book. In fact, it is in sober earnest that we would review a publication which has ruffled the wonted quiescence of our cachinnatory muscles more effectually than any other book of the season. The book (of which James Russell Lowell is said to be the author) is made up in this way": — Then follows a general plan of the book which we omit as a repetition of what has already been given, and to give space for some of the remaining criticisms which are exceedingly interesting, after a lapse of nearly four decades.

"Seemingly disconnected and inartificial enough, to be sure, yet the plan of the book is not without an object, and not without a peculiar fitness to attain its object. And yet such as it is in plan, order, and sentiment, compositions of far less moment have more than once been made the subject of protracted study and elaborate criticism when they have fortunately chanced to have been buried some twenty generations under the dusty pall of a dead language, or have treated of subjects that come less directly athwart the selfish interests and prejudices of the living and struggling world. Let this same uncouth Yankee dialect have passed away entirely from use, and the conflicting interests of

to-day have been supplanted by others of an entirely different character, and it would not be stranger than some things that have happened in the literary world, if some dilettante society should light on a single copy of this book and should find in it one of the most extraordinary productions of the age, and should cause fac-simile copies to be struck off for the especial use of its members. . . . Probably no reader who feels himself capable of judging, will recognize all the Yankeeisms of Hosea as genuine, or as actually in use, Parson Wilbur's strong assertion to the contrary notwithstanding; and more probably still, all will regard the representation as quite overdone, the variations from the established usages of our language being more numerous in the poem than they are in daily conversation. One reason for this impression on the part of readers, we conceive to be the fact, that many of the words which by a different spelling are made to appear among the peculiarities of the Yankee dialect, are yet only spelled according to their real sound in well-spoken English. So that if the text is read aloud according to the spelling in the hearing of another person, the hearer will recognize variations from the received standard of our language only in a small part of the instances in which he would see it, if his eye were on the page."

This last suggestion of reading aloud the dialect poems of the Biglow Papers, is a most excellent one. The ear recognizes much more readily than the eye, the peculiarities of any idiomatic form of speech, and, after all, our phonetic reformers rival even Hosea in their astonishing modes of spelling the ordinary words of every-day talk. What sounds correctly to the ear, often looks very strangely on the printed page !

Says a certain English writer :

“To James Russell Lowell belongs the rank of the prince of American humorists. It is sufficient to prove his right to that title to say that to him literature owes the Biglow Papers. If you would have a portrayal of the rustic Yankee character—the genuine Jonathan from the country, young and old—the typical country parson and prosperous newspaper-reading, politics-discussing, rustic-philosophical farmer—in all their eccentricity, dry wit, quaint thoughts and expressions, strong native shrewdness, and entirely original modes of looking at a subject, read, and re-read, and heartily laugh at the effusions of the immortal Biglow.

“You feel, even while reading this thoroughly ‘up-country’ vernacular, that it is, nevertheless, the production of a scholar, a philosopher, and a humorist of the highest refinement. That coarse-

ness and gross exaggeration which more than half spoils the exuberant humor of A. Ward is wholly wanting. Besides, you have always felt, in reading the sayings of the 'Great American Showman,' that there is a superficiality, a great lack of depth, a hollowness and utter absence of originality in the thoughts, ill-concealed even by the wholly original style of expression and irresistibly funny notions. There is far different material, a strikingly different mental calibre, in the Biglow Papers. Under the homely, humorous garb of rustic expression — in itself marvellously true to nature and illustrative of Yankee character — politics and philosophy are discussed, and opinions forcibly sustained or bitterly satirized."

## CHAPTER VII.

### FIRST EUROPEAN TRIP.

REFERRING to Longfellow's diary from 1840 to 1853, we find frequent mention of Lowell. At one time Longfellow spends an evening at Elmwood to meet Fredrika Bremer, whom he finds "a very quiet little body — sewing lace on her handkerchief all the evening." Another day he dines with Emerson at Lowell's, where a new club is planned, to dine together once a month. On Christmas Day, 1850, he writes: "Story and Lowell called on their way to town, looking so young and full of strength and hope;" and on the following day he adds: "I passed the afternoon with the Storys in Lowell's study, having a pleasant chat on Italy and art."

W. W. Story, the poet and sculptor, might almost be called Lowell's twin, for they were born on the same month of the same year, were graduated from Harvard College in the same class, and both studied law, only to leave the learned profession at call of the Muses. When Lowell wrote his

article for Putnam's Monthly, entitled "Cambridge Thirty Years Ago," he arranged it in the form of a letter addressed to "*Edelmann Storg*" — as a Swiss innkeeper had once construed the name of this intimate friend, "William Story." The delightful poem, "An Invitation," is doubtless addressed to the same friend :—

. . . . .

"Come back our ancient walks to tread,  
Dear haunts of lost or scattered friends,  
Old Harvard's scholar-factories red,  
Where song and smoke and laughter sped  
The nights to proctor-haunted ends.

"Constant are all our former loves,  
Unchanged the icehouse-girdled pond,  
Its hemlock glooms, its shadowy coves,  
Where floats the coot and never moves,  
Its slopes of long-tamed green beyond.

"Our old familiars are not laid,  
Though snapt our wands and sunk our books;  
They beckon not to be gainsaid,  
Where, round broad meads that mowers wade,  
The Charles his steel-blue sickle crooks.

. . . . .

"Come back! Not ours the Old World's good,  
The Old World's ill, thank God, not ours;  
But here, far better understood,  
The days enforce our native mood,  
And challenge all our manlier powers.

“Kindlier to me the place of birth  
 That first my tottering footsteps trod;  
 There may be fairer spots of earth  
 But all their glories are not worth  
 The virtue of the native sod.”

. . . . .

A pleasant story is told concerning these two friends by one who knew them intimately. When Lowell had recited the Commemoration Ode at Cambridge on the twenty-fifth of July, 1865, and the crowd was just dispersing, a fine-looking man pressed his way through the throng of people and grasped the poet's hand.

“Why, William Story!” exclaimed Lowell in astonishment, “when did you come over?”

“I landed at Boston this morning. I had heard you were to read a poem; there was just time to make the trip, and here I am.”

“And so you have come from Rome merely to hear me recite an ode? Well, it is just like you!” returned the orator of the day, with hearty appreciation.

Another intimate friend of Lowell's was Arthur Hugh Clough, the English poet and scholar who made his home in Cambridge for a short time. Speaking of the approval of certain friends, Lowell says in his introduction to the “Biglow Papers”: “With a feeling too tender and grateful to be



mixed with any vanity, I mention as one of these the late A. H. Clough, who more than any one of those I have known (no longer living), except Hawthorne, impressed me with the constant presence of that indefinable thing we call genius."

Longfellow summons Lowell, Felton, Clough and Charles Norton to feast on some English grouse and pheasant, "and very good they were," he adds, "both the guests and the game."

A few weeks later (January 5, 1853) Lowell gives a supper to Thackeray. The other guests are Felton, Clough, Dana, Dr. Parsons (Dante's translator), Estes Howe, and Longfellow. The latter writes: "We sat down at ten and did not leave the table till one. Very gay it was with stories and jokes:—

"'Will you take some Port?' said Lowell to Thackeray.

"'I dare drink anything that becomes a man.'

"'It will be a long time before that becomes a man.'

"'O, no!' cried Felton, it is *fast turning into one*.'

"As we were going away, Thackeray said, 'We have stayed too long.'

"'I should say,' replied Lowell, 'one long and too short—a dactylic supper.'"

Alluding to Clough, Longfellow says, "I like

him exceedingly, with his gentleness and his bewildered look, and his half-closed eyes. This afternoon we walked to see Lowell whom we found musing before his fire in his study. His wife came in, slender and pale as a lily."

In the summer of 1851 Lowell and his wife went to Europe in a sailing vessel, and spent a year abroad. The voyage was taken with the hope of bringing back health and strength to Mrs. Lowell, and the greater part of their stay on the Continent was spent in sunny Italy.

Of this first European trip, the poet has made a few delightful notes from which we give the following quotations:—

"A cloudless sunrise in mid-ocean is beyond comparison for simple grandeur. It is like Dante's style, bare and perfect. Naked sun meets naked sea, the true classic of nature. There may be more sentiment in morning on shore—the shivering fairy-jewelry of dew, the silver point-lace of sparkling hoar-frost—but there is also more complexity, more of the romantic. The one savors of the elder Edda, the other of the Minnesingers.

"And I thus floating, lonely elf,  
A kind of planet by myself,  
The mists draw up and furl away,  
And in the east a warning gray

Faint as the tints of oaken woods  
When o'er their buds May breathes and broods,  
Tells that the golden sunrise-tide  
Is lapsing up earth's thirsty side,  
Each moment purpling on the crest  
Of some stark billow farther west :  
And as the sea-moss droops and hears  
The gurgling flood that nears and nears,  
And then with tremulous content  
Floats out each thankful filament,  
So waited I until it came,  
God's daily miracle, — O shame  
That I had seen so many days  
Unthankful, without wondering praise,  
Not recking more this bliss of earth  
Than the cheap fire that lights my hearth ?  
But now glad thoughts and holy pour  
Into my heart, as once a year  
To San Miniato's open door,  
In long procession, chanting clear,  
Through slopes of sun, through shadows hoar,  
The coupled monks slow-climbing sing,  
And like a golden censer swing  
From rear to front, from front to rear  
Their alternating bursts of praise,  
Till the roof's fading seraphs gaze  
Down through an odorous mist, that crawls  
Lingeringly up the darkened walls,  
And the dim arches, silent long,  
Are startled with triumphant song."

. . . . .  
"The most beautiful thing I have seen at sea,  
all the more so that I had never heard of it, is the

trail of a shoal of fish through the phosphorescent water. It is like a flight of silver rockets, or the streaming of northern lights through that silent nether heaven. I thought nothing could go beyond that rustling star-foam which was churned up by our ship's bows, or those eddies and disks of dreamy flame that rose and wandered out of sight behind us.

" 'Twas fire our ship was plunging through,  
Cold fire that o'er the quarter flew ;  
And wandering moons of idle flame  
Grew full and waned, and went and came,  
Dappling with light the huge sea-snake  
That slid behind us in the wake.

"But there was something even more delicately rare in the apparition of the fish, as they turned up in gleaming furrows the latent moonshine which the ocean seemed to have hoarded against these vacant interlunar nights."

. . . . .

The poet's word picture of his first glimpse of the European shore is like an exquisite painting in water-color :—

"My first glimpse of Europe was the shore of Spain. Since we got into the Mediterranean, we have been becalmed for some days within easy view of it. All along are fine mountains, brown

all day, and with a bloom on them at sunset like that of a ripe plum. Here and there at their feet little white towns are sprinkled along the edge of the water, like the grains of rice dropped by the princess in the story. Sometimes we see larger buildings on the mountain slopes, probably convents. I sit and wonder whether the farther peaks may not be the Sierra Morena (the rusty saw) of Don Quixote. I resolve that they shall be, and am content.

. . . . .

“The first sight of a shore so historical as that of Europe gives an American a strange thrill. What we always feel the artistic want of at home, is background . . . . Surely, in all that concerns æsthetics, Europeans have us at an immense advantage. They start at a point which we arrive at after weary years, for literature is not shut up in books, nor art in galleries : both are taken in by unconscious absorption through the finer pores of mind and character in the atmosphere of society. We are not yet out of our Crusoe-hood, and must make our own tools as best we may. Yet I think we shall find the good of it one of these days, in being thrown back more wholly on nature ; and our literature, when we have learned to feel our own strength, and to respect our own thought because

it is ours, and not because the European Mrs. Grundy agrees with it, will have a fresh flavor and a strong body that will recommend it, especially as what we import is watered more and more liberally with every vintage."

Again the poet takes his magic brush, and paints for us the castles of the Rhine with all their romantic surroundings :—

"Mountains of every shape and hue changed their slow outlines ever as we moved, now opening, now closing around us, sometimes peering solemnly at us over each other's shoulders, and then sinking slowly out of sight, or, at some sharp turn of the path, seeming to stride into the valley and confront us with their craggy challenge, a challenge which the little valleys accepted, if we did not, matching their rarest tints of gray and brown, and pink and purple, or that royal dye to make which all these were profusely melted together for a moment's ornament, with as many shades of various green and yellow. Gray towns crowded and clung on the tops of peaks that seemed inaccessible. We owe a great deal of picturesqueness to the quarrels and thieveries of the barons of the Middle Ages. The traveller and artist should put up a prayer for their battered old souls. It was to be

out of their way and that of the Saracens that people were driven to make their homes in spots so sublime and inconvenient that the eye alone finds it pleasant to climb up to them. Nothing else but an American land-company ever managed to induce settlers upon territory of such uninhabitable quality. I have seen an insect that makes a mask for himself out of the lichens of the rock over which he crawls, contriving so to deceive the birds; and the towns in this wild region would seem to have been built on the same principle. Made of the same stone with the cliffs on which they perch, it asks good eyesight to make them out at the distance of a few miles, and every wandering mountain-mist annihilates them for the moment."

. . . . .  
"We presently came to our ruin, and very noble it was. The aqueduct had here been carried across a deep gorge, and over the little brook which whimpered along below towered an arch, as a bit of Shakespeare bestrides the exiguous rill of a discourse which it was intended to ornament. The only human habitation in sight was a little casetta on the top of a neighboring hill. What else of man's work could be seen was a ruined castle of the Middle Ages, and, far away upon the horizon, the eternal dome. A valley in the moon

could scarce have been lonelier, could scarce have suggested more strongly the feeling of preteriteness and extinction. The stream below did not seem so much to sing as to murmur sadly, *Conclusum est; periisti!* and the wind, sighing through the arch, answered, *Periisti!* Nor was the silence of Monte Cavi without meaning. That cup, once full of fiery wine, in which it pledged Vesuvius and Etna later born, was brimmed with innocent water now. Adam came upon the earth too late to see the glare of its last orgy, lighting the eyes of saurians in the reedy Campagna below. I almost fancied I could hear a voice like that which cried to the Egyptian pilot, *Great Pan is dead!* I was looking into the dreary socket where once glowed the eye that saw the whole earth vassal. Surely, this was the world's autumn, and I could hear the feet of Time rustling through the wreck of races and dynasties, cheap and inconsiderable as fallen leaves."

. . . . .

"From Palestrina to Cavi the road winds along a narrow valley, following the course of a stream which rustles rather than roars below. Large chestnut trees lean every way on the steep sides of the hills above us, and at every opening we could see great stretches of Campagna rolling away and away toward the bases of purple mount-



ains streaked with snow. The sides of the road were drifted with heaps of wild hawthorn and honeysuckle in full bloom, and bubbling with innumerable nightingales that sang unseen. Overhead the sunny sky tinkled with larks, as if the frost in the air were breaking up and whirling away on the swollen currents of spring."

. . . . .

"I am not ashamed to confess a singular sympathy with what are known as the Middle Ages. I cannot help thinking that few periods have left behind them such traces of inventiveness and power. Nothing is more tiresome than the sameness of modern cities; and it has often struck me that this must also have been true of those ancient ones in which Greek architecture or its derivatives prevailed — true at least as respects public buildings. But mediæval towns, especially in Italy, even when only fifty miles asunder, have an individuality of character as marked as that of trees. Nor is it merely this originality that attracts me, but likewise the sense that, however old, they are nearer to me in being modern and Christian. I find it harder to bridge over the gulf of Paganism than of centuries. Apart from any difference in the men, I had a far deeper emotion when I stood on the *Sasso di Dante*, than at Horace's Sabine

farm or by the tomb of Virgil. The latter, indeed, interested me chiefly by its association with comparatively modern legend ; and one of the buildings I am most glad to have seen in Rome is the Bear Inn where Montaigne lodged on his arrival."

And who but a poet like Lowell, with his sensitive, dreamy nature, could make us feel with him the impressiveness of St. Peter's ?

"To me the noon silence and solitude of St. Peter's were most impressive when the sunlight, made visible by the mist of the ever-burning lamps in which it was entangled, hovered under the dome like the holy dove goldenly descending. Very grand also is the twilight, when all outlines melt into mysterious vastness, and the arches expand and lose themselves in the deepening shadow. Then, standing in the deserted transept, you hear the far-off vespers swell and die like low breathings of the sea on some conjectured shore."

Mr. and Mrs. Lowell returned from Europe in the autumn of 1852. The trip had been beneficial in many ways, but Mrs. Lowell was still failing in health, and soon passed into a rapid decline. On the day of her death, in October, 1853, a child was born to Longfellow, who, in tender sympathy, writes that beautiful poem of "The Two Angels."

“Two angels, one of Life and one of Death,  
Passed o’er our village as the morning broke;  
The dawn was on their faces, and beneath,  
The sombre houses hearsed with plumes of smoke.

“Their attitude and aspect were the same,  
Alike their features and their robes of white;  
But one was crowned with amaranth, as with flame,  
And one with asphodels, like flakes of light.

. . . . .  
“’Twas at thy door, O friend! and not at mine,  
The angel with the amaranthine wreath,  
Pausing, descended, and with voice divine,  
Whispered a word that had a sound like Death.

“Then fell upon the house a sudden gloom,  
A shadow on those features fair and thin;  
And softly from that hushed and darkened room,  
Two angels issued, where but one went in.

“All is of God! If He but wave His hand,  
The mists collect, the rain falls thick and loud,  
Till, with a smile of light on sea and land,  
Lo! He looks back from the departing cloud.

“Angels of Life and Death alike are His;  
Without His leave they pass no threshold o’er;  
Who, then, would wish or dare, believing this,  
Against His messengers to shut the door?”

## CHAPTER VIII.

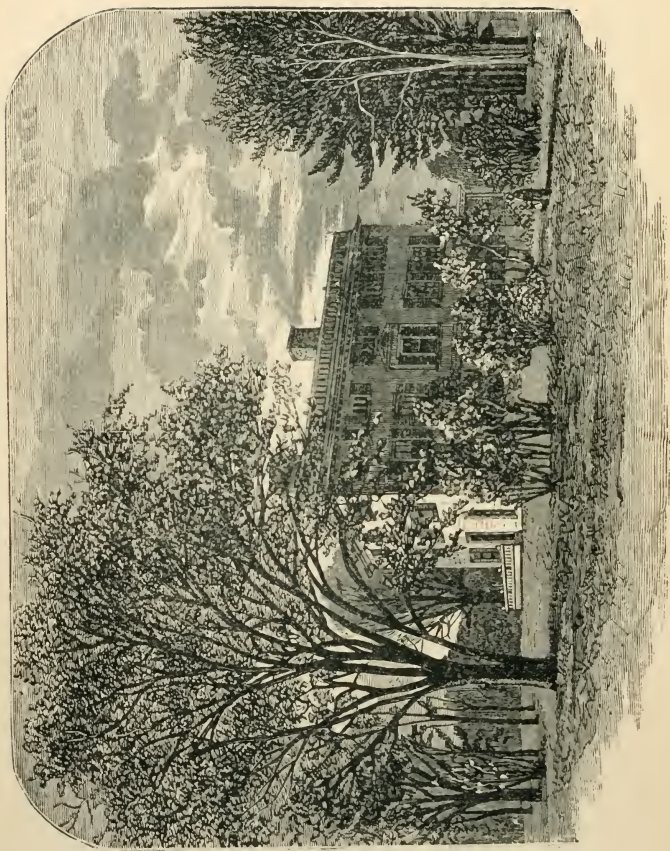
### ESSAYS AND LECTURES.

PUTNAM'S MONTHLY, conducted at this time by George William Curtis and Charles F. Briggs, was now the leading literary periodical of the day, and many of Lowell's finest poems and essays may be found within its columns. It was here, as we have already stated, that "Cambridge Thirty Years Ago" was first published; also, "A Winter Hymn to my Fire"; and here, if we mistake not, first appeared the "Moosehead Journal," which was afterwards included in "Fireside Travels," and from which the following pithy extracts are given.

Speaking of a town in Maine, Lowell says:—

"It has a good chance of being pretty; but, like most American towns, it is in a hobbledehoy age, growing yet, and one cannot tell what may happen. A child with great promise of beauty is often spoiled by its second teeth. There is something agreeable in the sense of completeness which a walled town gives one. It is entire, like a crystal





ELMWOOD, THE RESIDENCE OF LOWELL.

—a work which man has succeeded in finishing. I think the human mind pines more or less where everything is new, and is better for a diet of stale bread. The number of Americans who visit the Old World is beginning to afford matter of speculation to observant Europeans, and the deep inspirations with which they breathe the air of antiquity, as if their mental lungs had been starved with too thin an atmosphere. For my own part, I never saw a house which I thought old enough to be torn down. It is too like that Scythian fashion of knocking old people on the head. I cannot help thinking that the indefinable something which we call *character* is cumulative—that the influence of the same climate, scenery, and associations for several generations is necessary to its gathering head, and that the process is disturbed by continual change of place. The American is nomadic in religion, in ideas, in morals, and leaves his faith and opinions with as much indifference as the house in which he was born. However, we need not bother; Nature takes care not to leave out of the great heart of society either of its two ventricles of hold-back and go-ahead.

. . . . .  
 “We should have to be shipwrecked on Juan Fernandez not to find men who knew more than

we. In these travelling encounters one is thrown upon his own resources, and is worth just what he carries about him. The social currency of home, the smooth-worn coin which passes freely among friends and neighbors, is of no account. We are thrown back upon the old system of barter; and, even with savages, we bring away only as much of the wild wealth of the woods as we carry beads of thought and experience, strung one by one in painful years, to pay for them. A useful old jack-knife will buy more than the daintiest Louis Quinze paper-folder fresh from Paris. Perhaps the kind of intelligence one gets in these out-of-the-way places is the best—where one takes a fresh man after breakfast instead of the damp morning paper, and where the magnetic telegraph of human sympathy flashes swift news from brain to brain.”

At another time, describing their course down the river, he says :—

“The motion of the birch (canoe) reminded me of the gondola, and they represent among water-craft the *felidæ*, the cat tribe, stealthy, silent, treacherous, and preying by night. I closed my eyes, and strove to fancy myself in the dumb city, whose only horses are the bronze ones of St. Mark. But Nature would allow no rival, and bent down



an alder-bough to brush my cheek and recall me. Only the robin sings in the emerald chambers of these tall sylvan palaces, and the squirrel leaps from hanging balcony to balcony.

“The rains which the loons foreboded had raised the west branch of the Penobscot so much, that a strong current was setting back into the pond; and, when at last we brushed through into the river, it was full to the brim — too full for moose, the hunters said. Rivers with low banks have always the compensation of giving a sense of entire fulness. The sun sank behind its horizon of pines, whose pointed summits notched the rosy west in an endless black sierra. At the same moment the golden moon swung slowly up in the east, like the other scale of that Homeric balance in which Zeus weighed the deeds of men. Sunset and moonrise at once! Adam had no more in Eden — except the head of Eve upon his shoulder. The stream was so smooth, that the floating logs we met seemed to hang in a glowing atmosphere, the shadow-half being as real as the solid. And gradually the mind was etherized to a like dreamy placidity, till fact and fancy, the substance and the image, floating on the current of reverie, became but as the upper and under halves of one unreal reality.

“In the west still lingered a pale-green light. I

do not know whether it be from greater familiarity, but it always seems to me that the pinnacles of pine-trees make an edge to the landscape which tells better against the twilight, or the fainter dawn before the rising moon, than the rounded and cloud-cumulus outline of hard-wood trees."

The following anecdote is given by Lowell with his own inimitable humor : —

"Nineteen years ago I was walking through Franconia Notch and stopped to chat with a hermit, who fed with gradual logs the unwearied teeth of a saw-mill. As the panting steel slit off the *slabs* of the log, so did the less willing machine of talk, acquiring a steadier up-and-down motion, pare away that outward bark of conversation which protects the core, and which, like other bark, has naturally most to do with the weather, the season, and the heat of the day. At length I asked him the best point of view for the Old Man of the Mountain.

" 'Dunno — never see it.'"

"Too young and too happy either to feel or affect the juvenalian indifference, I was sincerely astonished, and I expressed it.

"The log-compelling man attempted no justification, but after a little asked, 'Come from Bawsn?'

" 'Yes' (with peninsula pride).

“ ‘Goodle to see in the vycinity o’ Bawsn.’

“ ‘O yes!’ I said, and I thought — see Boston and die! see the State Houses, old and new, the caterpillar wooden bridges crawling with innumerable legs across the flats of Charles; see the Common — the largest park, doubtless, in the world — with its files of trees planted as if by a drill sergeant, and then for your *nunc dimittis*!

“ ‘I should like, awl, I *should* like to stan’ on Bunker Hill. You’ve ben there offen, likely?’

“ ‘N-o-o-,’ unwillingly, seeing the little end of the horn in clear vision at the terminus of this Socratic perspective.

“ ‘Awl, my young frien’, you’ve larned neow thet wut a man *kin* see any day for nawthin’, childern half price, he never doos see. Nawthin’ pay, nawthin’ vally.’

“ ‘With this modern instance of a wise saw, I departed, deeply revolving these things with myself, and convinced that, whatever the ratio of population, the average amount of human nature to the square mile is the same the world over. I thought of it when I saw people upon the Pincian wondering at the Alchemist sun, as if he never burned the leaden clouds to gold in sight of Charles Street. I thought of it when I found eyes first discovering at Mont Blanc how beautiful snow

was. As I walked on, I said to myself, There is one exception, wise hermit—it is just these *gratis* pictures which the poet puts in his show-box, and which we all gladly pay Wordsworth and the rest for a peep at. The divine faculty is to see what everybody can look at.”

In Longfellow’s journal of the eighth of January, 1855, we read :—

“Lowell came in the evening, and we talked about his lectures on poetry which begin to-morrow (in the Lowell Institute course).”

On the following day he writes :— “Mr. Richard Grant White of New York, author of ‘Shakespeare’s Scholars,’ came to tea. He drove in with us to hear Lowell’s first lecture, an admirable performance and a crowded audience. After it we drove out to Norton’s, where with T. and the lecturer we had a pleasant supper.” On the twentieth, he makes another note of Lowell’s lectures, this one being upon the old English ballads, and “one of the best of the course.”

A few days later, Longfellow exclaims :—

“Lowell is to be my successor! Dr. Walker talked with me about it this morning. I have been to see Lowell, and the matter is as good as settled. I am sorry for some of my friends who wish the place.”

Ten years before, Lowell — then in his twenty-fifth year — had published a small volume entitled “Conversations on some of the Old Poets.” In this book may be clearly seen his peculiar talent, even then, for literary criticism. One “Conversation” is upon Chaucer, whose simplicity of style is strongly contrasted with the artificiality of Pope. Of the latter writer he says: “He treated the English language as the image-man has served the bust of Shakespeare yonder. To rid it of some external soils he has rubbed it down till there is no muscular expression left. . . . A poet could not write the Dunciad, nor read it.”

A large part of this early volume is given to comments upon Spenser, Chapman, Drayton, Marlowe, Ford, Marvell, and old Jeremy Taylor whose quaint originality is dwelt upon with much enthusiasm. And now, as will be seen, a decade of years has but ripened, not changed, the poet’s judgment.”

“He still reigns in literary tradition,” says Lowell of Dryden, “as when at Will’s his elbow-chair had the best place by the fire in winter, or on the balcony in summer, and when a pinch from his snuff-box made a young author blush with pleasure as would nowadays a favorable notice in the ‘Saturday Review.’ What gave and secures for him this singular eminence? To put it in a

single word, I think that his qualities and faculties were in that rare combination which makes character. This gave *flavor* to whatever he wrote — a very rare quality.

“Was he then a great poet? Hardly, in the narrowest definition. But he was a strong thinker who sometimes carried common sense to a height where it catches the light of a dimmer air, and warmed reason till it had well-nigh the illuminating property of intuition. Certainly he is not, like Spenser, the poets’ poet, but other men have also their rights. Even the Philistine is a man and a brother, and is entirely right so far as he sees. To demand more of him is to be unreasonable. And he sees, among other things, that a man who undertakes to write should first have a meaning perfectly defined to himself, and then should be able to set it forth clearly in the best words. This is precisely Dryden’s praise, and amid the rickety sentiment looming big through misty phrase which marks so much of modern literature, to read him is as bracing as a northwest wind. He blows the mind clear. In ripeness of mind and bluff heartiness of expression, he takes rank with the best. His phrase is always a short-cut to his sense, for his estate was too spacious for him to need that trick of winding the path of his thought about, and planting it out with

clumps of epithet, by which the landscape-gardeners of literature give to a paltry half-acre the air of a park. In poetry, to be next-best is, in one sense, to be nothing ; and yet to be among the first in any kind of writing, as Dryden certainly was, is to be one of a very small company. He had beyond most, the gift of the right word. And if he does not, like one or two of the greater masters of song, stir our sympathies by that indefinable aroma so magical in arousing the subtle associations of the soul, he has this in common with the few great writers, that the winged seeds of his thought embed themselves in the memory and germinate there. If I could be guilty of the absurdity of recommending to a young man any author on whom to form his style, I should tell him that, 'next to having something that will not stay unsaid, he could find no safer guide than Dryden.'

Again, when analyzing the wonderful power in Shakespeare's Dramas, he says, —

"The secret of force in writing lies not so much in the pedigree of nouns and adjectives and verbs, as in having something that you believe in to say, and making the parts of speech vividly conscious of it." . . .

"In the experiments made for casting the great bell for the Westminster Tower, it was found that

the superstition which attributed the remarkable sweetness and purity of tone in certain old bells to the larger mixture of silver in their composition had no foundation in fact. It was the cunning proportion in which the ordinary metals were balanced against each other, the perfection of form, and the nice gradations of thickness, that wrought the miracle. And it is precisely so with the language of poetry. The genius of the poet will tell him what word to use (else what use in his being poet at all?) ; and even then, unless the proportion and form, whether of parts or whole, be all that Art requires and the most sensitive taste finds satisfaction in, he will have failed to make what shall vibrate through all its parts with a silvery unison, — in other words, a poem. . . .

“ Mere vividness of expression, such as makes quotable passages, comes of the complete surrender of self to the impression, whether spiritual or sensual, of the moment. It is a quality, perhaps, in which the young poet is richer than the mature, his very inexperience making him more venturesome in those leaps of language that startle us with their rashness only to bewitch us the more with the happy ease of their accomplishment. For this there are no existing laws of rhetoric, for it is from such felicities that the rhetoricians deduce



and codify their statutes. It is something which cannot be improved upon or cultivated, for it is immediate and intuitive. But this power of expression is subsidiary, and goes only a little way toward the making of a great poet. Imagination, where it is truly creative, is a faculty, and not a quality ; it looks before and after, it gives the form that makes all the parts work together harmoniously toward a given end, its seat is in the higher reason, and it is efficient only as a servant of the will."

Lowell had now formally received his appointment of professor of *belles-lettres* at Harvard University, with leave of absence for two years, which was to be spent in study abroad. Longfellow writes on the seventeenth of May, 1855:—"A beautiful morning. Went and sat an hour with Lowell in his upper chamber among the tree tops. He sails for Havre the first of June." On the twenty-ninth, he adds:—"Lowell's friends gave him a farewell dinner at the Revere, whereat I had the honor of presiding. A joyous banquet ; one of the pleasantest I ever attended,—a meeting of friends to take leave of a friend whom we all love."

On the thirtieth, Longfellow drives into town with Lowell. "Saw him and Sumner depart for New York. Farewell to the Poet for a year, and to the Senator for a month or two !"

Lowell remained abroad until the spring of 1857, spending most of his time in Dresden, where he perfected his knowledge of the German language. The estimation in which he then held, and still holds, the study of Greek is clearly set forth in the following extract from one of his lectures : —

“ The true poetic imagination is of one quality, whether it be ancient or modern, and equally subject to those laws of grace, of proportion, of design, in whose free service, and in that alone, it can become art. Those laws are something which do not

“ Alter when they alteration find,  
And bend with the remover to remove.

And they are more clearly to be deduced from the eminent examples of Greek literature than from any other source.

“ It is the advantage of this select company of ancients that their works are defecated of all turbid mixture of contemporaneousness, and have become to us pure *literature*, our judgment and enjoyment of which cannot be vulgarized by any prejudices of time or place. This is why the study of them is fitly called a liberal education, because it emancipates the mind from every narrow provincialism whether of egoism or tradition, and is the apprenticeship that everyone must serve before becoming

a free brother of the guild which passes the torch of life from age to age. There would be no dispute about the advantages of that Greek culture which Schiller advocated with such generous eloquence, if the great authors of antiquity had not been degraded from teachers of thinking to drillers in grammar, and made the ruthless pedagogues of root and inflection, instead of companions for whose society the mind must put on her highest mood. The discouraged youth too naturally transfers the epithet of *dead* from the languages to the authors that wrote in them.

“What concern have we with the shades of dialect in Homer or Theocritus, provided they speak the spiritual *lingua franca* that abolishes all alienage of race, and makes whatever shore of time we land on hospitable and homelike ?

“There is much that is deciduous in books, but all that gives them a title to rank as literature in the highest sense is perennial. Their vitality is the vitality not of one or another blood or tongue, but of human nature ; their truth is not topical and transitory, but of universal acceptations ; and thus all great authors seem the coevals not only of each other, but of whoever reads them, growing wiser with him as he grows wise, and unlocking to him one secret after another as his own life and experi-

ence give him the key, but on no other condition. Their meaning is absolute, not conditional ; it is a property of *theirs*, quite irrespective of manners or creed ; for the highest culture, the development of the individual by observation, reflection, and study, leads to one result, whether in Athens or in London. The more we know of ancient literature, the more we are struck with its modernness, just as the more we study the maturer dramas of Shakespeare, the more we feel his nearness in certain primary qualities to the antique and classical. Yet even in saying this, I tacitly make the admission that it is the Greeks who must furnish us with our standard of comparison. Their stamp is upon all the allowed measures and weights of æsthetic criticism. Nor does a consciousness of this, nor a constant reference to it, in any sense reduce us to the mere copying of a by-gone excellence ; for it is the test of excellence in any department of art that it can never be bygone, and it is not mere difference from antique models, but the *way* in which that difference is shown, the direction it takes, that we are to consider in our judgment of a modern work. The model is not there to be copied merely, but that the study of it may lead us insensibly to the same processes of thought by which its purity of outline and harmony of parts were attained.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, SECOND MARRIAGE, LIFE  
AT ELMWOOD.

SOON after Lowell's return from Europe, he consults Longfellow as to the feasibility of starting a new magazine. "I told him," writes Longfellow, "that I would write for it if I wrote for any magazine." A few days later he "dines in town at Parker's with Emerson, Lowell, Motley, Holmes, Cabot, Underwood, and the publisher Phillips, to talk about the new magazine which the latter wishes to establish."

"It will no doubt be done," adds Longfellow, "though I am not so eager about it as the rest." At another dinner in town with the new Magazine Club, the title, etc., is discussed, but with no result. In November of that same year, however, "The Atlantic Monthly" is fairly launched upon the great sea of literature, and James Russell Lowell is chosen as its editor.

In the first number of the new magazine Longfellow, true to his promise, is numbered among the

contributors, and sends the editor his beautiful poem in honor of Florence Nightingale, — “Santa Filomena.” Lowell himself contributes an amusing fable entitled, “The Origin of Didactic Poetry,” and other well-known lights in the literary world are ably represented in this first number of “The Atlantic Monthly.”

The new magazine was started on the anti-slavery platform, and political articles of great ability were often published in its columns. The editor himself writes “A Pocket Celebration of the Fourth” and “A Sample of Consistency” — both of a political character — which were published in some of the earlier numbers ; and one poem, “The Nest,” which was written for the magazine, has never re-appeared in the “complete” edition of the poet’s works.

Lowell continued editor of “The Atlantic Monthly” for five years. During this time, the senior members of the publishing house of Phillips and Sampson both died, and the financial management of the magazine was transferred to Ticknor and Fields.

Lowell was also editor of the “North American Review” from 1863 to 1872.

It was in the autumn of 1857 that Mr. Lowell was married to Miss Frances Dunlap of Portland, an estimable lady who had had charge of the educa-

tion of his daughter during his stay in Europe. For a while he made his home with Doctor Estes Howe on Oxford Street, Cambridge, but soon returned to his beloved Elmwood.

Of his quiet, happy life in the old parsonage we have many charming pictures : —

“ The house, an old-fashioned, roomy mansion, set in a large triangular wooded space, with grassy areas, under the brow of Mount Auburn, has been familiarized through description and picture ; and the author himself, of medium height, well set, with a substantial form and a strikingly attractive face, of light complexion, full eyes, mobile and expressive features, with the beard and drooping mustache which are so marked a trait of his picture, and now, like the hair, turning gray, — he, too, is no stranger. Some ten years ago this figure, in the ‘reefer’ which he then wore, was well known in the college yard, giving an impression of stoutness, and almost bluntness, until one caught sight of the face with its half-recognition and good-will to the younger men ; and in his own study or on the leafy veranda of the house, one perceived only the simplest elements of unconscious dignity, the frankness of complete cultivation, and the perfect welcome. If one passed into his home at that time he would have found a hall that opened out

into large rooms on either hand, the whole furnished in simple and solid fashion, with a look that betokened long inhabitancy by the family; and on the left hand he would have entered the study with its windows overlooking long green levels among the trees on the lawn, for though the estate is not very extensive in this direction, the planting has been such that the seclusion seems as inviolable as in the more distant country. The attachment of its owner to these 'paternal acres' is sufficient to explain why when others left Cambridge in summer—and then it is as quiet as Pisa—he still found it 'good enough country' for him; but besides this affection for the soil, the landscape itself has a charm that would content a poet. To the rear of this room, or rather of its chimney, for there was no partition, was another, whose windows showed the grove and shrubbery at the back toward the hill; and this view was perhaps the more peaceful.

"Here in these two rooms were the usual furnishings of a scholar's study—tables and easy-chairs, pictures and pipes, the whole lending itself to an effect of lightness and simplicity, with the straw-matting islanded with books and (especially in the further room) strewn with scholar's litter, from the midst of which one day the poet, in



search of 'what might be there,' drew from nearly under my feet the manuscript of Clough's 'Amours de Voyage.' The books filled the shelves upon the wall, everywhere, and a library more distinctly gathered for the mere love of literature is not to be found. It is not large as libraries go — some four thousand volumes. To tell its treasures would be to catalogue the best works of man in many languages. Perhaps its foundation-stone, in a sense, is a beautiful copy of the first Shakespeare folio; Lord Vernon's Dante is among the 'tallest' volumes, and there are many rare works in much smaller compass. The range in English is perhaps the most sweeping, but the precious part to the bibliophile is the collection, a very rich one, of the old French and other Romantic poetry. More interesting in a personal way are the volumes one picks up at random, which are mile-stones of an active literary life — old English romances, where the rivulet is not of the text but of the blue-pencil, the preliminary stage of a trenchant essay on some Halliwell perhaps; or possibly some waif of a useless task, like a re-edited Donne, to whose *manes* the unpoetic publisher was unwilling to make a financial sacrifice."

"For many years," writes the poet from Elmwood, "I have been in the habit of noting down

some of the leading events of my embowered solitude, such as the coming of certain birds and the like — a kind of *memoires pour servir*, after the fashion of White, rather than properly digested natural history. I thought it not impossible that a few simple stories of my winged acquaintances might be found entertaining by persons of kindred taste.

“There is a common notion that animals are better meteorologists than men, and I have little doubt that in immediate weather-wisdom they have the advantage of our sophisticated senses (though I suspect a sailor or shepherd would be their match), but I have seen nothing that leads me to believe their minds capable of erecting the horoscope of a whole season, and letting us know beforehand whether the winter will be severe or the summer rainless. . . . I have noted but two days’ difference in the coming of the song-sparrow between a very early and a very backward spring. This very year I saw the linnets at work thatching, just before a snowstorm which covered the ground several inches deep for a number of days. They struck work and left us for a while, no doubt in search of food. Birds frequently perish from sudden changes in our whimsical spring weather of which they had no foreboding. More than

thirty years ago, a cherry-tree, then in full bloom, near my window, was covered with humming-birds benumbed by a fall of mingled rain and snow, which probably killed many of them. It would seem that their coming was dated by the height of the sun, which betrays them into unthrifty matrimony.

“ ‘ So nature pricketh hem in their corages ’ ;

but their going is another matter. The chimney swallows leave us early, for example, apparently so soon as their latest fledgelings are firm enough of wing to attempt the long rowing match that is before them. On the other hand, the wild geese probably do not leave the North till they are frozen out, for I have heard their bugles sounding southward so late as the middle of December. What may be called local migrations are doubtless dictated by the chances of food. I have once been visited by large flights of cross-bills ; and whenever the snow lies long and deep on the ground, a flock of cedar-birds comes in mid-winter to eat the berries on my hawthorns. I have never been quite able to fathom the local, or rather geographical partialities of birds. Never before this summer (1870) have the king-birds, handsomest of flycatchers, built in my orchard ; though I always know

where to find them within half a mile. The rose-breasted grosbeak has been a familiar bird in Brookline (three miles away), yet I never saw one here till last July, when I found a female busy among my raspberries and surprisingly bold. I hope she was *prospecting* with a view to settlement in our garden. She seemed, on the whole, to think well of my fruit, and I would gladly plant another bed if it would help to win over so delightful a neighbor.

“The robins are not good solo singers, but their chorus, as, like primitive fire-worshippers, they hail the return of light and warmth to the world, is unrivalled. There are a hundred singing like one. They are noisy enough then, and sing, as poets should, with no afterthought. But when they come after cherries to the tree near my window, they muffle their voices, and their faint *pip, pip, pop!* sounds far away at the bottom of the garden, where they know I shall not suspect them of robbing the great black-walnut of its bitter-rinded store. They are feathered Pecksniffs, to be sure, but then how brightly their breasts, that look rather shabby in the sunlight, shine in a rainy day against the dark green of the fringe-tree! After they have pinched and shaken all the life out of an earthworm, as Italian cooks pound all the spirit

out of a steak, and then gulped him, they stand up in honest self-confidence, expand their red waistcoats with the virtuous air of a lobby member, and outface you with an eye that calmly challenges inquiry. ‘Do *I* look like a bird that knows the flavor of raw vermin? I throw myself upon a jury of my peers. Ask any robin if he ever ate anything less æsthetic than the frugal berry of the juniper, and he will answer, that his vow forbids him.’ Can such an open bosom cover such depravity? Alas, yes! I have no doubt his breast was redder at that very moment with the blood of my raspberries. On the whole, he is a doubtful friend in the garden. He makes his dessert of all kinds of berries, and is not averse to early pears. But when we remember how omnivorous he is, eating his own weight in an incredibly short time, and that nature seems exhaustless in her invention of new insects hostile to vegetation, perhaps we may reckon that he does more good than harm. For my own part, I would rather have his cheerfulness and kind neighborhood than many berries.”

Again looking from his study windows, Lowell, with the keen eye of a naturalist, makes the following notes:—

“Certain birds have disappeared from our neigh-

borhood within my memory. I remember when the whip-poor-will could be heard in Sweet Auburn. The night-hawk, once common, is now rare. The brown thrush has moved farther up country. For years I have not seen or heard any of the larger owls, whose hooting was one of my boyish terrors. The cliff-swallow, strange emigrant, that eastward takes his way, has come and gone again in my time. The bank-swallows, well-nigh innumerable during my boyhood, no longer frequent the crumbly cliff of the gravel-pit by the river. The barn-swallows, which once swarmed in our barn, flashing through the dusty sunstreaks of the mow, have been gone these many years. My father would lead me out to see them gather on the roof, and take counsel before their yearly migration, as Mr. White used to see them at Selborne. *Eheu, fugaces!* Thank fortune, the swift still glues his nest, and rolls his distant thunders night and day in the wide-throated chimneys, still sprinkles the evening air with his merry twittering. The populous heronry in Fresh Pond meadows has been well-nigh broken up, but still a pair or two haunt the old home, as the gypsies of Ellangowan their ruined huts, and every evening fly over us riverwards, clearing their throats with a hoarse hawk as they go, and, in cloudy weather, scarce higher

than the tops of the chimneys. Sometimes I have known one to alight in one of our trees, though for what purpose I never could divine. Kingfishers have sometimes puzzled me in the same way, perched at high noon in a pine, springing their watchman's rattle when they flitted away from my curiosity, and seeming to shove their top-heavy heads along as a man does a wheelbarrow.

"Some birds have left us, I suppose, because the country is growing less wild. I once found a summer duck's nest within quarter of a mile of our house, but such a *trouvaille* would be impossible now as Kidd's treasure. And yet the mere taming of the neighborhood does not quite satisfy me as an explanation. Twenty years ago, on my way to bathe in the river, I saw every day a brace of woodcock, on the miry edge of a spring within a few rods of a house, and constantly visited by thirsty cows. There was no growth of any kind to conceal them, and yet these ordinarily shy birds were almost as indifferent to my passing as common poultry would have been. Since bird-nesting has become scientific, and dignified itself as oölogy, that, no doubt, is partly to blame for some of our losses. But some old friends are constant. Wilson's thrush comes every year to remind me of that most poetic of ornithologists. He flits before me through the

pine-walk like the very genius of solitude. A pair of pewees have built immemorially on a jutting brick in the arched entrance to the ice-house. Always on the same brick, and never more than a single pair, though two broods of five each are raised there every summer.

. . . . .  
“The dead limbs of our elms, which I spare to that end, bring us the flicker every summer, and almost daily I hear his wild scream and laugh close at hand, himself invisible. He is a shy bird, but a few days ago I had the satisfaction of studying him through the blinds as he sat on a tree within a few feet of me. Seen so near and at rest, he makes good his claim to the title of pigeon-woodpecker. Lumberers have a notion that he is harmful to timber, digging little holes through the bark to encourage the settlement of insects. The regular rings of such perforations which one may see in any apple-orchard seem to give some probability to this theory. Almost every season a solitary quail visits us, and, unseen among the currant-bushes, calls *Bob White, Bob White*, as if he were playing at hide-and-seek with that imaginary being. A rarer visitant is the turtle-dove, whose pleasant coo (something like the muffled crow of a cock from a coop covered with snow) I have sometimes



heard, and whom I once had the good luck to see close by me in the mulberry-tree."

Like White's "Selburne," only more finished in its style, reads the following:—

"There is something inexpressibly dear to me in these old friendships of a lifetime. There is scarce a tree of mine but has had, at some time or other, a happy homestead among its boughs, to which I cannot say,

"Many light hearts and wings,  
Which now be dead, lodged in thy living bowers."

"My walk under the pines would lose half its summer charm were I to miss that shy anchorite, the Wilson's thrush, nor hear in haying-time the metallic ring of his song, that justifies his rustic name of *scythe-whet*.

"I protect my game as jealously as an English squire. If anybody had oölogized a certain cuckoo's nest I know of (I have a pair in my garden every year), it would have left me a sore place in my mind for weeks. I love to bring these aborigines back to the mansuetude they showed to the early voyagers, and before (forgive the involuntary pun) they had grown accustomed to man and knew his savage ways. And they repay your kindness

with a sweet familiarity too delicate ever to breed contempt. I have made a Penn-treaty with them, preferring that to the Puritan way with the natives, which converted them to a little Hebraism and a great deal of Medford rum. If they will not come near enough to me (as most of them will), I bring them close with an opera-glass, — a much better weapon than a gun. I would not, if I could, convert them from their pretty pagan ways.”

And when the season changes and bleak winter reigns at Elmwood, the poet’s eye is still open to the beauties of Nature : —

“The preludings of Winter are as beautiful as those of Spring. In a gray December day, when, as the farmers say, it is too cold to snow, his numbed fingers will let fall doubtfully a few star-shaped flakes, the snow-drops and anemones that harbinger his more assured reign. Now, and now only, may be seen heaped on the horizon’s eastern edge, those ‘blue clouds’ from forth which Shakespeare says that Mars ‘doth pluck the masoned turrets.’

“Sometimes, also, when the sun is low, you will see a single cloud trailing a flurry of snow along the southern hills in a wavering fringe of purple. And when at last the real snowstorm comes, it leaves the earth with a virginal look on it that no

other of the seasons can rival,—compared with which, indeed, they seem soiled and vulgar.

“And what is there in nature so beautiful as the next morning after such confusion of the elements? Night has no silence like this of busy day. All the batteries of noise are spiked. We see the movement of life as a deaf man sees it, a mere wraith of the clamorous existence that inflicts itself on our ears when the ground is bare. The earth is clothed in innocence as a garment. Every wound of the landscape is healed; whatever was stiff has been sweetly rounded as the breasts of Aphrodite; what was unsightly has been covered gently with a soft splendor, as if, Cowley would have said, Nature had cleverly let fall her handkerchief to hide it. If the Virgin (*Nôtre Dame de la neige*) were to come back, here is an earth that would not bruise her foot nor stain it.”

The following extract from Lowell's Note-book reminds one of his beautiful winter picture in “Sir Launfal”:—

“What a cunning silversmith is Frost! The rarest workmanship of Delhi or Genoa copies him but clumsily, as if the fingers of all other artists were thumbs. Fernwork and lacework and flagree in endless variety, and under it all the water tinkles like a distant guitar, or drums like a tambourine, or

gurgles like the Tokay of an anchorite's dream. Beyond doubt there is a fairy procession marching along those frail arcades and translucent corridors.

‘ Their oaten pipes blow wondrous shrill,  
The hemlock small blow clear.’

And hark ! is that the ringing of Titania's bridle, or the bells of the wee, wee hawk that sits on Oberon's wrist ? This wonder of Frost's handiwork may be had every winter, but he can do better than this, though I have seen it but once in my life. There had been a thaw without wind or rain, making the air fat with gray vapor. Towards sundown came that chill, the avant-courier of a northwesterly gale. Then, though there was no perceptible current in the atmosphere, the fog began to attach itself in frosty roots and filaments to the southern side of every twig and grass-stem. The very posts had poems traced upon them by this dumb minstrel. Wherever the moist seeds found lodgment grew an inch-deep moss fine as cob-web, a slender coral-reef, argentine, delicate, as of some silent sea in the moon. . . .

“ Now look down from your hillside across the valley. The trees are leafless, but this is the season to study their anatomy, and did you ever notice before how much color there is in the twigs of

many of them? And the smoke from those chimneys is so blue it seems like a feeder of the sky into which it flows. Winter refines it and gives it agreeable associations. In summer it suggests cookery or the drudgery of steam-engines, but now your fancy (if it can forget for a moment the dreary usurpation of stoves) traces it down to the fireside and the brightened faces of children."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE BIGLOW PAPERS. — SECOND SERIES.

TWENTY years elapsed between the publication of the first and second series of the Biglow Papers. The Civil War had begun and Birdofredum Sawin, who after his exploits in Mexico had decided to join the Southerners, writes a long epistle in rhyme to Hosea. "I invented Mr. Sawin," says Lowell, "for the clown of my little puppet-show. I meant to embody in him that half-conscious unmorality which I had noticed as the recoil in gross natures from a puritanism that still strove to keep in its creed the intense savor which had long gone out of its faith and life. . . . Mr. Sawin's name sprang from the accident of a rhyme at the end of his first epistle, and I purposely christened him by the impossible surname of Birdofredum not more to stigmatize him as the incarnation of 'Manifest Destiny,' in other words, of national recklessness as to right and wrong, than to avoid the chance of wounding any private sensitiveness. . . . I needed on

occasion to rise above the level of mere *patois*, and for this purpose conceived the Rev. Mr. Wilbur, who should express the more cautious element of the New England character and its pedantry as Mr. Biglow should serve for its homely common sense vivified and heated by conscience. The parson was to be the complement rather than the antithesis of his parishioner, and I felt, or fancied, a certain humorous element in the real identity of the two under a seeming incongruity. Mr. Wilbur's fondness for scraps of Latin, though drawn from the life, I adopted deliberately to heighten the contrast.

"The success of my experiment," continues Lowell, "soon began not only to astonish me, but to make me feel the responsibility of knowing that I held in my hand a weapon instead of the mere fencing-stick I had supposed. . . . I found the verses of my pseudonyme copied everywhere; I saw them pinned up in workshops; I heard them quoted and their authorship debated; I once even, when rumor had at length caught up my name in one of its eddies, had the satisfaction of overhearing it demonstrated, in the pauses of a concert, that I was utterly incompetent to have written anything of the kind. I had read too much not to know the utter worthlessness of con-

temporary reputation, especially as regards satire, but I knew also that by giving a certain amount of influence it also had its worth, if that influence were used on the right side. I had learned, too, that the first requisite of good writing is to have an earnest and definite purpose, whether æsthetic or moral, and that even good writing, to please long, must have more than an average amount either of imagination or common sense. The first of these falls to the lot of scarcely one in several generations; the last is within the reach of many in every one that passes; and of this an author may fairly hope to become in part the mouthpiece. If I put on the cap and bells and made myself one of the court fools of King Demos, it was less to make his majesty laugh than to win a passage to his royal ears for certain serious things which I had deeply at heart. I say this because there is no imputation that could be more galling to any man's self-respect than that of being a mere jester. I endeavored, by generalizing my satire, to give it what value I could beyond the passing moment and the immediate application."

Of the inimitable little ballad, "The Courtin'," beginning —

"Zekel crep' up quite unbeknown  
An' peeked in threu the winder,"



Lowell says, "While the introduction to the First Series of the Biglow Papers was going through the press, I received word from the printer that there was a blank page left which must be filled. I sat down at once and improvised another fictitious 'notice of the press,' in which, because verse would fill up space more cheaply than prose, I inserted an extract from a supposed ballad of Mr. Biglow. I kept no copy of it, and the printer, as directed, cut it off when the gap was filled. Presently I began to receive letters asking for the rest of it, sometimes for the *balance* of it. I had none, but to answer such demands, I patched a conclusion upon it in a later edition. Afterward, being asked to write it out as an autograph for the Baltimore Sanitary Commission Fair, I added other verses, into some of which I infused a little more sentiment in a homely way, and after a fashion completed it by sketching in the characters and making it a connected story."

In the original poem there were but six stanzas, while in the completed sketch there are twenty-four.

After an inside view of Secession given by Birdofredum Sawin in this "Second Series of the Biglow Papers," a burlesque message of Jefferson Davis to the Confederate Congress follows, and the

“Speech of Honourable Preserved Doe in Secret Caucus.” Then comes “Sunthin’ in the Pastoral Line,” which the poet says he attempted in remembrance of the counsel of his friend, Arthur Hugh Clough. “He often suggested,” writes Lowell, “that I should try my hand at some Yankee Pastorals, which would admit of more sentiment and a higher tone without foregoing the advantage offered by the dialect. I have never completed anything of the kind, but in this Second Series of the Biglow Papers, both my remembrance of his counsel and the deeper feeling called up by the great interests at stake, led me to venture some passages nearer to what is called poetical than could have been admitted without incongruity into the former series.”

A few quotations from Hosca’s attempts in the “Pastoral Line” will show the reader how well he succeeded : —

“ I, country-born an’ bred, know where to find  
Some blooms that make the season suit the mind,  
An’ seem to metch the doubtin’ blue-bird’s notes, —  
Half-vent’rin’ liverworts in furry coats,  
Bloodroots, whose rolled-up leaves ef you oncurl,  
Each on em’s cradle to a baby-pearl, —  
But these are jes’ Spring’s pickets ; sure ez sin,  
The rebbles frosts’ll try to drive ’em in ;  
For half our May’s so awfully like Mayn’t,

'Twould rile a Shaker or an evrige saint;  
 Though I own up I like our back'ard springs  
 Thet kind o' haggie with their greens an' things  
 An' when you 'most give up, 'ithout more words  
 Toss the fields full o' blossoms, leaves, an' birds:  
 Thet's Northun natur', slow an' apt to doubt,  
 But when it *doos* git stirred, ther' 's no gin-out!

. . . . .

Young oak-leaves mist the side-hill woods with pink;  
 The catbird in the laylock-bush is loud;  
 The orchards turn to heaps o' rosy cloud;  
 Red-cedars blossom tu, though few folks know it,  
 An' look all dipt in sunshine like a poet;  
 The lime-trees pile their solid stacks o' shade  
 An' drows'ly simmer with the bees' sweet trade;  
 In ellow-shrouds the flashin' hangbird clings  
 An' for the summer vy'ge his hammock slings;

. . . . .

'nuff sed, June's bridesman, poet o' the year,  
 Gladness on wings, the bobolink, is here;  
 Half-hid in tip-top apple-blooms he swings,  
 Or climbs against the breeze with quiverin' wings,  
 Or, givin' way to 't in a mock despair  
 Runs down, a brook o' laughter, thru the air."

The death of good Parson Wilbur is announced in the preface to the next poem, and the reader feels he has lost a dear and honored friend. His colleague and successor, Rev. Jeduthan Hitchcock, edits his literary remains which are, however, "so fragmentary and even chaotic, written as they

are on the backs of letters in an exceedingly cramped chirography, — here a memorandum for a sermon; there an observation of the weather; now the measurement of an extraordinary head of cabbage, and then of the cerebral capacity of some reverend brother deceased; a calm inquiry into the state of modern literature, ending in a method of detecting if milk be impoverished with water, etc., — that any attempts at selection seemed desperate.”

One quotation from the Parson’s “Table Talk” must not be omitted, because of its striking individuality as well as its great beauty:—

“I think I could go near to be a perfect Christian if I were always a visitor, as I have sometimes been, at the house of some hospitable friend. I can show a great deal of self-denial where the best of everything is urged upon me with kindly importunity. It is not so very hard to turn the other cheek for a kiss. And when I meditate upon the pains taken for our entertainment in this life, on the endless variety of seasons, of human character and fortune, on the costliness of the hangings and furniture of our dwelling here, I sometimes feel a singular joy in looking upon myself as God’s guest, and cannot but believe that we should all be wiser and happier, because more

grateful, if we were always mindful of our privilege in this regard. And should we not rate more cheaply any honor that men could pay us, if we remember that every day we sat at the table of the Great King? Yet must we not forget that we are in strictest bonds His servants also; for there is no impiety so abject as that which expects to be *dead-headed* (*ut ita dictum*) through life, and which calling itself trust in Providence, is in reality asking Providence to trust us and taking up all our goods on false pretences. It is a wise rule to take the world as we find it, not always to leave it so."

In the tenth poem of this Second Series, the poet pays a tender tribute to his three young nephews whose lives were lost in the Civil War:—

. . . . .  
 "Why, hain't I held 'em on my knee?

Didn't I love to see 'em growin',

Three likely lads ez wal could be,

Hahnsome an' brave an' not tu knowin'?

I set an' look into the blaze

Whose natur' jes' like theirn, keeps climbin'

Ez long 'z it lives, in shinin' ways,

An' half despise myself for rhymin'.

"Wut's words to them whose faith an' truth

On War's red techstone rang true metal,

Who ventered life an' love an' youth

For the gret prize o' death in battle?

To him who, deadly hurt, agen  
 Flashed on afore the charge's thunder,  
 'Tippin' with fire the bolt of men  
 Thet rived the Rebel line asunder?

"'Tain't right to hev the young go fust,  
 All throbbin' full o' gifts an' graces,  
 Leavin' life's paupers dry ez dust  
 To try an' make b'lieve fill their places:  
 Nothin' but tells us wut we miss,  
 Ther' 's gaps our lives can't never fay in,  
 An' *thet* world seems so fur from this  
 Lef' for us loafers to grow gray in!"

. . . . .

Hosea's "Speech in March Meeting" ends the Second Series of the Biglow Papers which were dedicated to the poet's friend, E. R. Hoar, and published in book form by Ticknor and Fields, in 1867. Not long after, the two series were published together, with a glossary and index and various notes and comments.

A well-known English critic writes as follows of the "Biglow Papers":—

"Ardent, enthusiastic, eager to rehearse the epic of a man, Lowell threw himself into the stream of national life. The current was already seething and foaming with the impulse of a mighty movement. The application of science to industrial enterprise changed the face of nature; habits,

ideas, fashions of thought, altered with marvellous rapidity; population doubled and trebled itself; society underwent a transformation as complete as it was sudden; literature became a power. Everywhere was spreading the influence of Channing and of Emerson, humanizing Religion and Nature, protesting in the name of something higher against the exclusive reign of the senses and the understanding. Towards the same end contributed the genial culture and tender romance of Longfellow. A movement so rapid and extensive necessarily brought in its train vast social changes. Strange hopes were in the air of an approaching millennium: the sin of slavery must be purged before its advent. Lowell threw himself heart and soul, into the cause of the Abolitionists. His fervor made him didactic, but its fiery impulse when the preaching element subsided, gave his verse a peculiar force.

“In the ‘Biglow Papers’ his enthusiasm urged him to a masterpiece which ranks with the greatest political satires of classic or modern Europe, and enrolled Lowell among the successful humorists of the world. Parson Wilbur, with his simplicity and vanity, his pedantry and wit, his solid and varied learning, his combined capacity for sermonizing and hard hitting, is an incomparable

editor. Hosea's drily humorous picturesqueness, strong common sense, effective and homely illustrations, and quaint Scriptural allusions, admirably represent the New England character. The type of provincial Yankee which Lowell depicts is now nearly extinct. Competent judges appear to be agreed that the dialect is reproduced with the utmost purity, and that as a specimen of the vernacular idiom the Biglow Papers are infinitely superior to Sam Slick or Major Downing. Hosea Biglow and Birdofredum Sawin are dramatic creations, racy of the soil, yet intensely human, at once American and universal. It is not in the New World only that there are military braggarts, or that 'pious editors' or 'north-by-south candidates' endeavor to dodge the moral laws of the universe, and steal a march on virtue without having their retreat cut off. There is no ribaldry in the Scriptural phrases ; they are not introduced as an element in the ridiculous effect, but are the natural expression of a simple people whose language and modes of thought are saturated by Biblical feeling and phrases. There is in the pungent satire none of the misanthropic ferocity of a Swift, nor the irritated vanity of a Byron ; but beneath the bitter hatred of slavery, the incisive sharpness of the political denunciations, the withering scorn of



social faults, lies a fund of genial humour and the human sympathy. The purpose is grave and serious, for it forms part of the writer's very existence; yet the fun is apparently reckless. A second glance shows that only a cool brain, steady hand, and complete self-command, could apply the lash with such unerring aim and sinewy strength to the tenderest part of the adversary. The blows fall quickly, unexpectedly, and never miss their mark. They not only sting, but make their victims ludicrous. Lowell effected for the Abolitionist cause what a wilderness of homilists could not achieve. He turned the laugh against the slave-owners; the light shafts of ridicule penetrated the toughest hides and could not be withdrawn. The second series is inferior to the first in freshness and vigor. Yet there are lines in the tenth letter of the series, which perhaps strike as high a note of poetry as Lowell has ever reached. 'The Biglow Papers' form an invaluable commentary on the history of the times. All the deep interests, with which the twenty years that succeeded 1848 were throbbing, beat in that unique collection of humorous and passionate verse. None the less interesting are the Papers because they show the mental changes through which Lowell passed. In the first series he complains of the ascendancy of

the South in the councils of the States, and prefers the severance of the Federal Union to its continuance. In the second, he advocates the assertion by force of arms of the physical supremacy of the North. The light, airy tone, in which the later series begins, shows that the war was expected to be nothing but a summer picnic; but the tone grows grimmer as the death-grapple continued, till personal loss and the gloom and horror of the gigantic struggle drew from the poet the tenth letter of the series."

## CHAPTER XI.

POEMS OF THE WAR AND "UNDER THE WILLOWS."

ON the twenty-first of July, 1865, Commemoration services were held at Cambridge, and that beautiful Ode was read by Lowell, "To the ever sweet and shining memory of the ninety-three sons of Harvard College who died for their country in the war of nationality." Among this number were eight of the poet's own kindred. The Ode is one of marvellous beauty and power, and shows a finer quality than the best of Dryden's. The poet felt what he wrote, and the words thrilled with the life-pulse that prompted them. Listen, for instance, to this stirring passage :—

. . . . .  
"Some day the soft Ideal that we wooed  
Confronts us fiercely, foe-beset, pursued,  
And cries reproachful : ' Was it, then, my praise,  
And not myself was loved ? Prove now thy truth ;  
I claim of thee the promise of thy youth ;  
Give me thy life, or cower in empty phrase,  
The victim of thy genius, not its mate ! '  
Life may be given in many ways,

And loyalty to Truth be sealed  
 As bravely in the closet as the field,  
     So bountiful is Fate;  
 But then to stand beside her  
     When craven churls deride her,  
 To front a lie in arms and not to yield,  
     This shows, methinks, God's plan  
     And measure of a stalwart man,  
     Limbed like the old heroic breeds,  
     Who stands self-poised on manhood's solid earth,  
 Not forced to frame excuses for his birth,  
 Fed from within with all the strength he needs."

And what a fine tribute the poet pays to our  
 Martyred Chief :—

. . . . .  
     " Nature, they say, doth dote,  
     And cannot make a man  
     Save on some worn-out plan,  
     Repeating us by rote ;  
 For him her Old-World moulds aside she threw,  
     And, choosing sweet clay from the breast  
     Of the unexhausted West,  
 With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,  
 Wise, steadfast in the strength of God, and true.

. . . . .  
     Here was a type of the true elder race  
 And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to face."

With touching pathos the poet continues :—

" We welcome back our bravest and our best ;—  
 Ah me ! not all ! some come not with the rest,

Who went forth brave and bright as any here !  
 I strive to mix some gladness with my strain,  
     But the sad strings complain,  
     And will not please the ear :  
 I sweep them for a pæan, but they wane  
     Again and yet again  
 Into a dirge, and die away, in pain.  
 In these brave ranks I only see the gaps,  
 Thinking of dear ones whom the dumb turf wraps,  
 Dark to the triumph which they died to gain :  
     Fittier may others greet the living,  
     For me the past is unforgiving ;  
     I with uncovered head  
     Salute the sacred dead,  
 Who went, and who returned not. — Say not so !  
 'Tis not the grapes of Canaan that repay,  
 But the high faith that failed not by the way ;  
 Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave ;  
 No bar of endless night exiles the brave ;  
     And to the saner mind  
 We rather seem the dead that stayed behind."

The closing stanza rings out with the eloquence  
 of a true patriot as well as poet : —

"Bow down, dear Land, for thou hast found release !  
     Thy God, in these distempered days  
     Hath taught thee the sure wisdom of His ways,  
 And through thine enemies hath wrought thy peace !  
     Bow down in prayer and praise !  
 No poorest in thy borders but may now  
 Lift to the juster skies a man's enfranchised brow,

O Beautiful! my Country! ours once more!  
 Smoothing thy gold of war-dishevelled hair  
 O'er such sweet brows as never other wore,  
     And letting thy set lips,  
     Freed from wrath's pale eclipse,  
 The rosy edges of their smile lay bare,  
 What words divine of lover or of poet  
 Could tell our love and make thee know it,  
 Among the Nations bright beyond compare?  
     What were our lives without thee?  
     What all our lives to save thee?  
     We reck not what we gave thee;  
     We will not dare to doubt thee,  
 But ask whatever else, and we will dare!"

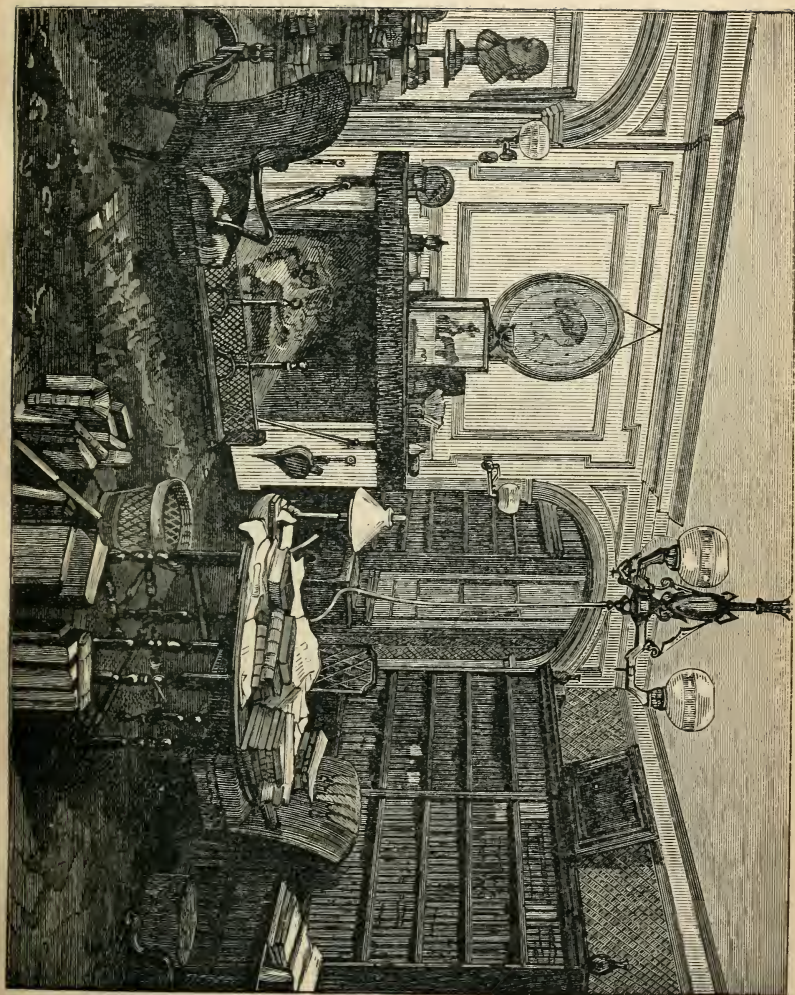
Among other "Poems of the War," written at this time, was "The Washers of the Shroud," in which the poet, "in mystery of dream" sees

    "the ancient Three  
 Known to the Greek's and to the Northman's creed,  
 That sit in shadow of the mystic Tree,  
 Still crooning, as they weave their endless brede,  
 One song: 'Time was, Time is, and Time shall be.'"

The poet listens to their fateful words: —

"What make we, murmur'st thou? and what are we?  
 When empires must be wound, we bring the shroud,  
 The time-old web of the implacable Three:  
 Is it too coarse for him, the young and proud?  
 Earth's mightiest deigned to wear it, — why not he?

    . . . . .  
 "Rough are the steps, slow-hewn in flintiest rock,  
 States climb to power by; slippery those with gold









Down which they stumble to eternal mock :  
No chafferer's hand shall long the sceptre hold  
Who, given a Fate to shape, would sell the block.

“ ‘ We sing old Sagas, songs of weal and woe,  
Mystic because too cheaply understood ;  
Dark sayings are not ours ; men hear and know,  
See Evil weak, see strength alone in Good,  
Yet hope to stem God's fire with walls of tow.

“ ‘ Time Was unlocks the riddle of Time Is,  
That offers choice of glory or of gloom ;  
The solver makes Time Shall Be surely his.  
But hasten, Sisters ! for even now the tomb  
Grates its slow hinge, and calls from the abyss.’ ”

Then “ with clenched hands and passionate pain,”  
the poet cries : —

“ ‘ But not for him, not yet for him,  
Whose large horizon, westering, star by star  
Wins from the void to where on Ocean's rim  
The sunset shuts the world with golden bar,  
Not yet his thews shall fail, his eye grow dim !

“ ‘ His shall be larger manhood, saved for those  
That walk unblenching through the trial-fires ;  
Not suffering, but faint heart, is worst of woes,  
And he no base-born son of craven sires,  
Whose eye need blench confronted with his foes.’ ”

These few stanzas from the poem will serve to  
give the reader an idea of its scope and beauty,  
but to be fully appreciated it must be read entire.

“*Memoriæ Positum*” is a beautiful tribute to the heroic Colonel Robert G. Shaw who fell in the assault upon Fort Wagner :—

. . . . .  
 “Brave, good, and true,  
 I see him stand before me now,  
 And read again on that young brow,  
     Where every hope was new,  
*How sweet were life!* Yet, by the mouth firm-set,  
 And look made up for Duty’s utmost debt,  
     I could divine he knew  
 That death within the sulphurous hostile lines,  
 In the mere wreck of nobly-pitched designs,  
     Pluck’s heart’s-ease, and not rue.

. . . . .  
 “Right in the van,  
 On the red rampart’s slippery swell,  
 With heart that beat a charge, he fell  
     Forward, as fits a man;  
 But the high soul burns on to light men’s feet  
 Where death for noble ends makes dying sweet;  
     His life her crescent’s span  
 Orbs full with share in their undarkening days  
 Who ever climbed the battailous steeps of praise  
     Since valor’s praise began.”

The whole poem is full of patriotism and a certain sympathetic pathos which reaches its climax in the closing stanza :—

“I write of one  
 While with dim eyes I think of three;  
 Who weeps not others fair and brave as he?”

Ah, when the fight is won,  
 Dear Land, whom triflers now make bold to scorn,  
 (Thee! from whose forehead Earth awaits her morn,)  
 How nobler shall the sun  
 Flame in thy sky, how braver breathe thy air,  
 That thou bred'st children who for thee could dare  
 And die as thine have done!"

The lines written for the poet Bryant's seventieth birthday may well be included among the War Poems, for it was written "On Board the '76":—

"Our ship lay tumbling in an angry sea,  
 Her rudder gone, her mainmast o'er the side;  
 Her scuppers, from the waves' clutch staggering free  
 Trailed threads of priceless crimson through the tide;  
 Sails, shrouds, and spars with pirate cannon torn,  
 We lay, awaiting morn.

. . . . .

"I leaned against my gun still angry-hot,  
 And my lids tingled with the tears held back;  
 This scorn methought was crueller than shot:  
 The manly death grip in the battle-wrack,  
 Yard-arm to yard-arm were more friendly far  
 Than such fear-smothered war."

. . . . .

The poet, mourning the want of fealty where it was most to be expected, turns with admiring gaze to —

. . . "one, the Singer of our crew,  
Upon whose head Age waved his peaceful sign,  
But whose red heart's-blood no surrender knew;  
And couchant under brows of massive line,  
The eyes, like guns beneath a parapet,  
Watched, charged with lightnings yet.

"The voices of the hills did his obey;  
The torrents flashed and tumbled in his song;  
He brought our native fields from far away,  
Or set us mid the innumerable throng  
Of dateless woods, or where we heard the calm  
Old homestead's evening psalm.

"But now he sang of faith to things unseen,  
Of freedom's birthright given to us in trust;  
And words of doughty cheer he spoke between,  
That made all earthly fortune seem as dust,  
Matched with that duty, old as Time and new,  
Of being brave and true."

And what finer tribute could one war-poet pay  
to another than the following:—

"In our dark hours he manned our guns again;  
Remanned ourselves from his own manhood's stores;  
Pride, honor, country throbbed through all his strain;  
And shall we praise? God's praise was his before;  
And on our futile laurels he looks down,  
Himself our bravest crown!"

These "Poems of the War" were published, with the long poem "Under the Willows," and other miscellaneous poems, in 1869, by Fields,

Osgood & Co. The volume was dedicated in verse to Charles Eliot Norton, and the prefatory note reads as follows:—

“No collection of the author’s poems has been made since 1848, and some of those in this volume date back even farther than that. All but two of the shortest have been printed before, either wholly or in part. . . .

“A few pieces, more strictly comic, have been omitted as out of keeping; and, ‘Fitz Adams’ Story’ which some good friends will miss, is also left to stand over, because it belongs to a connected series, which it is hoped may be completed if the days should be propitious.”

This “Story of Fitz Adams’” first appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1867. It reminds one strongly of the Biglow Papers, although the Yankee dialect is only occasionally interspersed. The scene is laid in Shebagog County, and the landlord of the rustic inn is painted as carefully as one of Chaucer’s portraits. Indeed the whole story might well be called a modern “Canterbury Tale.” The author intended it as part of a longer poem to be called “The Nooning,” but the original plan has never been carried out.

“Under the Willows” is a poem full of outdoor delights, and surely—

. . . "to bask and ripen is sometimes  
The student's wiser business; the brain  
That forages all climes to line its cells,  
Ranging both worlds on highest wings of wish,  
Will not distil the juices it has sucked  
To the sweet substance of pellucid thought,  
Except for him who hath the secret learned  
To mix his blood with sunshine, and to take  
The winds into his pulses."

Beneath the "willow tent," the poet sees a  
glorious picture : —

. . . "the sliding Charles,  
Blue toward the west, and bluer and more blue,  
Living and lustrous as a woman's eyes  
Look once and look no more, with southward curve  
Ran crinkling sunniness, like Helen's hair  
Glimpsed in Elysium, insubstantial gold;  
From blossom-clouded orchards, far away  
The bobolink tinkled; the deep meadows flowed  
With multitudinous pulse of light and shade  
Against the bases of the southern hills,  
While here and there a drowsy island rick  
Slept and its shadow slept; the wooden bridge  
Thundered, and then was silent; on the roofs  
The sun-warped shingles rippled with the heat;  
Summer on field and hill, in heart and brain,  
All life washed clean in this high tide of June."

From his boyhood these old willows had been  
an inspiration to the poet. One, he says, —

. . . "is as old to me as life;  
And under it full often have I stretched,  
Feeling the warm earth like a thing alive,  
And gathering virtue in at every pore  
Till it possessed me wholly, and thought ceased,  
Or was transfused in something to which thought  
Is coarse and dull of sense. Myself was lost,  
Gone from me like an ache, and what remained  
Became a part of the universal joy.  
My soul went forth, and, mingling with the tree  
Danced in the leaves; or, floating in the cloud,  
Saw its white double in the stream below;  
Or else, sublimed to purer ecstasy,  
Dilated in the broad blue over all.  
I was the wind that dappled the lush grass,  
The tide that crept with coolness to its roots,  
The thin-winged swallow skating on the air;  
The life that gladdened everything was mine."

The willows, however, have other visitors : —

"Here, sometimes, in this paradise of shade,  
Rippled with western winds, the dusty Tramp,  
Seeing the treeless causey burn beyond,  
Halts to unroll his bundle of strange food  
And munch an unearned meal."

Here, too : —

"The Scissors-grinder, pausing, doffs his hat,  
And lets the kind breeze, with its delicate fan,  
Winnow the heat from out his dank gray hair, —  
A grimy Ulysses, a much-wandered man," —

The poet, quick to learn from all, entraps the latter "with a long-suffering knife":—

"And, while its poor blade hums away in sparks,  
Sharpen my wit upon his gritty mind,  
In motion set obsequious to his wheel,  
And in its quality not much unlike.

"Nor wants my tree more punctual visitors.  
The children, they who are the only rich,  
Creating for the moment, and possessing  
Whate'er they choose to feign, — for still with them  
Kind Fancy plays the fairy godmother,

. . . . .

"Here, too, the men that mend our village ways,  
Vexing McAdam's ghost with pounded slate,  
Their noonin' take;"—

And our poet with —

. . . "observant eye  
Will find mankind in little, as the stars  
Glide up and set, and all the heavens revolve  
In the small welkin of a drop of dew.

. . . . .

O, benediction of the higher mood  
And human-kindness of the lower! for both  
I will be grateful while I live, nor question  
The wisdom that hath made us what we are."

These brief extracts give but a suggestion of the beauty and strength of the poem, as a whole.



To fully appreciate "Under the Willows" it must be read entire, and if possible out of doors, on a day when "June is full of invitations sweet"; and, —

"With one great gush of blossom storms the world!"

The dedication of "Under the Willows" to Charles Eliot Norton, is in verse, and in the poet's best vein. Here are a few of the lines: —

"The wind is roistering out of doors,  
My windows shake and my chimney roars;  
My Elmwood chimneys seem crooning to me,  
As of old, in their moody, minor key,  
And out of the past the hoarse wind blows,  
As I sit in my arm-chair, and toast my toes.

"Ho! ho! nine-and-forty!' they seem to sing,  
'We saw you a little toddling thing.  
We knew you child and youth and man,  
A wonderful fellow to dream and plan,  
With a great thing always to come, — who knows?  
Well, well! 'tis some comfort to toast one's toes.

. . . . .

"I sit and dream that I hear, as of yore,  
My Elmwood chimneys' deep-throated roar;  
If much be gone, there is much remains;  
By the embers of loss I count my gains,  
You and yours with the best, till the old hope glows  
In the fanciful flame, as I toast my toes.

“Instead of a fleet of broad-browed ships,  
To send a child's armada of chips!  
Instead of the great guns, tier on tier  
A freight of pebbles and grass-blades sere!  
' Well, maybe more love with the less gift goes,'  
I growl, as, half moody, I toast my toes.”

## CHAPTER XII.

THE CATHEDRAL. — LOWELL'S RELIGIOUS FAITH. —  
PROSE WRITINGS.

IN Lowell's next long poem, "The Cathedral," we have a beautiful exposition of the poet's religious faith: —

. . . . .  
"I, that still pray at morning and at eve,  
Loving those roots that feed us from the past,  
And prizing more than Plato things I learned  
At that best academe, a mother's knee,  
Thrice in my life perhaps have truly prayed,  
Thrice, stirred below my conscious self, have felt  
That perfect disenthralment which is God;  
Nor know I which to hold worst enemy, —  
Him who on speculation's windy waste  
Would turn me loose, stript of the raiment warm  
By Faith contrived against our nakedness,  
Or him who, cruel-kind, would fain obscure,  
With painted saints and paraphrase of God,  
The soul's east window of divine surprise."

. . . . .  
"Science was Faith once; Faith were Science now,  
Would she but lay her bow and arrows by  
And arm her with the weapons of the time.

Nothing that keeps thought out is safe from thought.  
 For there's no virgin-fort but self-respect,  
 And Truth defensive hath lost hold on God.  
 Shall we treat Him as if He were a child  
 That knew not His own purpose? nor dare trust  
 The Rock of Ages to their chemic tests,  
 Lest some day the all-sustaining base divine  
 Should fail from under us, dissolved in gas?

. . . . .

“Man cannot be God's outlaw if he would,  
 Nor so abscond him in the caves of sense  
 But Nature still shall search some crevice out  
 With messages of splendor from that Source  
 Which, dive he, soar he, baffles still and lures.  
 This life were brutish did we not sometimes  
 Have intimations clear of wider scope,  
 Hints of occasion infinite, to keep  
 The soul alert with noble discontent  
 And onward yearnings of unstilled desire;  
 Fruitless, except we now and then divined  
 A mystery of Purpose, gleaming through  
 The secular confusions of the world,  
 Whose will we darkly accomplish, doing ours.  
 No man can think nor in himself perceive,  
 Sometimes at waking, in the street sometimes,  
 Or on the hillside, always unforewarned,  
 A grace of being, finer than himself,  
 That beckons and is gone, — a larger life  
 Upon his own impinging, with swift glimpse  
 Of spacious circles luminous with mind,  
 To which the ethereal substance of his own  
 Seems but gross cloud to make that visible,  
 Touched to a sudden glory round the edge.”

It is the Cathedral at Chartres that Lowell pictures in his poem :—

“ Silent and gray as forest-leaguered cliff  
 Left inland by the ocean's slow retreat,  
 That hears afar the breeze-borne rote, and longs,  
 Remembering shocks of surf that clomb and fell,  
 Spume-sliding down the baffled decuman,  
 It rose before me, patiently remote  
 From the great tides of life it breasted once,  
 Hearing the noise of men as in a dream.  
 I stood before the triple northern port,  
 Where dedicated shapes of saints and kings,  
 Stern faces bleared with immemorial watch,  
 Looked down benignly grave and seemed to say,  
*Ye come and go incessant ; we remain  
 Safe in the hallowed quiets of the past ;  
 Be reverent, ye who flit and are forgot,  
 Of faith so nobly realized as this !*”

The keynote of the whole poem is given in the quotation from Euripides, on the title page :—

“ Not at all do we set our wits against the gods.  
 The traditions of the fathers, and those of equal  
 date which we possess, no reasoning shall over-  
 throw ; not even if through lofty minds it dis-  
 covers wisdom.”

This, surely, is the best form of conservatism,  
 and—

. . . “ if his Church be doubtful, it is sure  
 That, in a world, made for whatever else,

Not made for mere enjoyment, in a world  
Of toil but half-requited, or, at best,  
Paid in some futile currency of breath,  
A world of incompleteness, sorrow swift  
And consolation laggard, whatsoe'er  
The form of building or the creed professed,  
The Cross, bold type of shame to homage turned  
Of an unfinished life that sways the world,  
Shall tower as sovereign emblem over all."

The poet's beautiful, child-like faith in a Divine Providence is grandly expressed in the closing stanza : —

"O Power, more near my life than life itself  
(Or what seems life to us in sense immured),  
Even as the roots, shut in the darksome earth,  
Share in the tree-top's joyance, and conceive  
Of sunshine and wide air and wingèd things  
By sympathy of nature, so do I  
Have evidence of Thee so far above,  
Yet in and of me! Rather Thou the root  
Invisibly sustaining, hid in light,  
Not darkness, or in darkness made by us.  
If sometimes I must hear good men debate  
Of other witness of Thyself than Thou,  
As if there needed any help of ours  
To nurse Thy flickering life, that else must cease,  
Blown out, as 'twere a candle, by men's breath,  
My soul shall not be taken in their snare,  
To change her inward surety for their doubt  
Muffled from sight in formal robes of proof :

While she can only feel herself through Thee,  
 I fear not Thy withdrawal ; more I fear  
 Seeing, to know Thee not, hoodwinked with dreams  
 Of signs and wonders, while, unnoticed, Thou  
 Walking Thy garden still, commun'st with men,  
 Missed in the commonplace of miracle."

But it is not only in "The Cathedral" that we find an expression of the poet's deep religious nature. In many of his shorter poems we find the same beautiful trust in God, and a love for man that is above all creeds :—

"Rabbi Jehosha had the skill  
 To know that heaven is in God's will.

. . . . .

"'Twere glorious, no doubt, to be  
 One of the strong-winged Hierarchy,  
 To burn with Seraphs, or to shine  
 With Cherubs, deathlessly divine ;  
 Yet I perhaps, poor earthly clod,  
 Could I forget myself in God,  
 Could I but find my nature's clew  
 Simply as birds and blossoms do,  
 And but for one rapt moment know  
 'Tis heaven must come, not we must go,  
 Should win my place as near the throne  
 As the pearl-angel of its zone,  
 And God would listen 'mid the throng  
 For my one breath of perfect song,  
 That in its simple human way,  
 Said all the Host of Heaven could say."

In one of his earlier poems, "The Search," the poet, after seeking for Christ in Nature, in the proud World, at dear Love's feet, finds —

. . . "in a hovel rude,  
With naught to fence the weather from his head,"

the King he sought.

"A naked hungry child  
Clung round his gracious knee,  
And a poor hunted slave looked up and smiled  
To bless the smile that set him free;  
New miracles I saw his presence do, —  
No more I knew the hovel bare and poor,  
The gathered chips into a woodpile grew,  
The broken morsel swelled to goodly store;  
I knelt and wept: my Christ no more I seek,  
His throne is with the outcast and the weak."

Again in "Godminster Chimes" the same broad charity is expressed: —

. . . . .  
"Through aisles of long-drawn centuries  
My spirit walks in thought,  
And to that symbol lifts its eyes  
Which God's own pity wrought;  
From Calvary shines the altar's gleam,  
The Church's East is there,  
The Ages one great minster seem,  
That throbs with praise and prayer.



" And all the way from Calvary down  
 The carven pavement shows  
 Their graves who won the martyr's crown,  
 And safe in God repose ;  
 The saints of many a warring creed  
 Who now in heaven have learned  
 That all paths to the Father lead  
 Where Self the feet have spurned.

. . . . .

" O chime of sweet Saint Charity,  
 Peal soon that Easter morn  
 When Christ for all shall risen be,  
 And in all hearts new-born !  
 That Pentecost when utterance clear  
 To all men shall be given,  
 When all shall say *My Brother* here,  
 And hear *My Son* in heaven ! "

In "The Foot-Path," the poet protests against all form of Science that would make a "twice-told tale of God"; and once in a conversation upon the "promise-and-potency" phrases of Tyn-dall, he exclaimed with fervor: "Let whoever wishes to, believe that the idea of Hamlet or Lear was developed from a clod; I will not."

Lowell's prose works consist, first, of a little book published as early as 1845, upon "Conversations on Some of the Old Poets." No table of contents is given, but the three conversations are upon Chaucer, Chapman and Ford. In 1854, a

"Life of Keats" accompanied an edition of his Poems, and was published by Little, Brown & Co.

"Fireside Travels," published in 1864, is a book of charming essays, some of which had already appeared in Putnam's Monthly and other magazines of the day. "Cambridge Thirty Years Ago"; "A Moosehead Journal"; "At Sea"; "In the Mediterranean"; "Italy"; and "A Few Bits of Roman Mosaic" make up the table of contents. This volume has since been reprinted by Houghton, Mifflin & Co. in the "Riverside Aldine Series."

In No. 31 of "Modern Classics," "A Moosehead Journal" may also be found.

Two volumes, "Among my Books," give descriptive and critical essays upon various literary subjects. The first series, published in 1870, contains six thoughtfully-written articles upon Dryden; Witchcraft; Shakespeare; Lessing; New England Two Centuries Ago; Rousseau and the Sentimentalists. The essays in the Second Series, published six years later, are upon Dante; Spenser; Wordsworth; Milton, and Keats.

"My Study Windows," published in 1870, contains some of the best of Lowell's prose writings. From the first of these, "My Garden Acquaintance," we have already given quotations, and also from "A Good Word for Winter." The other

essays in this volume are upon "A Great Public Character" (Hon. Josiah Quincy); Carlyle; Abraham Lincoln; "The Life and Letters of James Gates Percival"; Thoreau; Swinburne's Tragedies; Chaucer; "Library of Old Authors"; "Emerson the Lecturer"; and Pope.

Says an appreciative critic:—

"In his prose, as in his verse, Lowell is, in the best sense of the much-abused word, 'original.' But his originality is neither a trick of speech nor an affectation of novelty. It is rather the gift of seeing things with his own eyes, and expressing precisely what he sees. Conservative and radical at once, he prizes the oldest fact, but questions the most venerable tradition. Whatever he writes carries with it the unmistakable flavor of individuality, and straightway betrays its authorship. The seeds may be traced to a thousand sources, but the fruit is native to the soil. Not merely the words, but the whole cast and color of the thought are thoroughly his own. Yet, on the other hand, no modern writer suggests so often or so strongly the earlier masters of our tongue, or seems to have drunk so deeply at the wells of English undefiled. Passages in his essays recall, not by servile imitation, but by natural kinship, the judicious Hooker, the learned Bacon, and the exuberant fertility of

Jeremy Taylor. More fitly than Charles Lamb, whose delicacy re-appears in the descriptions of the cuckoo and the red squirrel, Lowell might be called the last of the Elizabethans, for he enriches his pages after the older manner with a wealth of allusion drawn from the store-house of learning and experience. But the title should be understood of kinship alone, for Lowell is not an anachronism in any sense, and declines to forget the present or discount the future in idle adoration of the past.

“The singular felicity with which Lowell chooses his words has often been noted, and has been pronounced instinctive. The breadth of his vocabulary is not less remarkable, and both must be explained together. A native gift of discrimination cannot be denied, but patient effort has had its share also in the large result. Until reading and writing come by nature, the native gift cannot be invoked as the sole cause for differences in song or speech. His earliest volume in prose, ‘Conversations on Some of the Older Poets,’ reveals already his close and sympathetic study of our older literature. The prefaces to the ‘Biglow Papers’ disclose a specialist’s patience and care in tracing out through older English dialects the pedigree of our vernacular words and idioms. Minute research and mastery of details may repel the dilettante and enslave the

pedant, but to him who can command them for higher purposes, they minister as handmaids to native genius. And out of this study of our English tongue, in its literature and in its dialectic forms, Lowell has gathered strength, richness, variety, and appositeness, the qualities that mark his style in verse and prose."

To these Volumes of Prose Essays, Lowell has recently added another entitled, "Democracy and Other Addresses."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### DIPLOMATIC SERVICE ABROAD.

IN 1877 Lowell received from President Hayes the appointment of Minister of the United States to Spain. Three years later he was transferred by the same executive to England. Referring to his diplomatic service here, Rev. A. P. Peabody says :—

“I am not unmindful that the mission to England — but in a single instance dishonored — has been repeatedly honored in the persons of eminent, even preëminent men ! Least of all can I forget that to the unparalleled wisdom, discretion, disinterested patriotism of Charles Francis Adams as our Minister our country owes, it may be, her unmaimed life ; for statesmanship less able, vigilant, and unselfish than his could not have precluded the recognition by Great Britain of the rebel confederacy, with its not improbable issue in the dissolution of the Union. But without prejudice to honored memories, it may be said with confidence that no man has represented or could

represent so many sides and aspects of American life and so favorably as Mr. Lowell, and that to him more largely than to any other man—we might almost say, to all other men—we are indebted for the just appreciation of our claims on the friendly regard and intimate fellow-feeling of the mother country.”

“James Russell Lowell,” writes Charles F. Richardson, “represents American culture at its best, and has proved to Englishmen that it may be as broad and fine as European culture. In him have been fitly shown the possible attainments of the English people in its ‘third home’—to borrow Dr. Freeman’s phrase; and he has embodied abroad, to our immediate and lasting credit, the culture of that land which has produced the imagination and the style of Emerson, and the genius of Longfellow—all three his friends. He has well borne his message from the banks of the Charles and the Androscoggin.”

Of his personal appearance, while he was minister to England, a correspondent to the London “World” writes, on visiting him:—

“Seated in an easy chair, reading, is a light, spare man with a profusion of curling hair and as luxuriant beard which is almost white. His manner as he rises to greet you is singularly quiet and unaf-

fect. He reminds you of nothing so much as the beautiful Indian summer of his native land, differing only from mid-summer in the circumstance that the subdued tints of the foliage and the still dreamy air tell you instinctively that they are the heralds of coming winter. He turns toward you his full, deep, gray eyes, at once thoughtful and penetrating, and seems more inclined to listen than to talk. The conversation drifts from one subject to another, and it is only when some chord which interests him is struck that you catch a momentary glimpse of the varied knowledge, the rich cultivation, the genius and power which have made for him so great a name on both sides of the Atlantic."

One who saw him at Chelsea, says that "though beginning to speak of himself as old, his white beard is almost the outward and only visible sign of age." And the same writer adds: "For all his elegant gentlemanhood, he has lived intensely in personal, patriotic, humanitarian, and, may it not be added, religious sympathies?"

The editor of the "Literary World" compares Lowell's diplomatic service with that of Bancroft's, as follows:—

"However the scales of ultimate opinion may turn, Lowell undoubtedly stands before us, since



the death of Emerson and Longfellow, as our foremost man of letters ; the only one who can properly be said to contest the claim being the veteran George Bancroft, who by a curious coincidence wears, like Lowell, the double laurels of diplomacy and letters. Bancroft, indeed, surpassed Lowell in diplomacy — being far more severely tested — as distinctly as Lowell surpasses him in imagination and in wit ; but his career attracted less attention, inasmuch as Berlin was much farther off than London, and its gossip was less active and pervasive, so that Americans hear less of what was done.

“ Yet Mr. Bancroft’s influence, like that of Mr. Lowell, was largely social, and he accomplished in that sphere one triumph more conspicuous in character and more truly American in tone than any single feat of Mr. Lowell’s, since he first, in his own receptions, broke down the barrier that had hitherto parted the aristocratic and the learned classes of Germans. On the other hand, the social triumphs of Mr. Lowell occurred in what is perhaps the most highly organized and well-fenced society in the whole world — that of London.

“ It is not strange that in a society like this a sphere opened itself for the original and well-trained wit of Mr. Lowell — a preëminently Amer-

ican wit, which travels several seconds quicker per mile, so to speak, than the corresponding grade of English talent. Add to this the cosmopolitan training that had come by long residence in France, Italy, and Germany; with a knowledge of English literature rarely equalled on either side the Atlantic; add also a facility of public speech such as is not here so remarkable, perhaps, but is to be heard in London only from Americans, Irishmen, Lord Rosebery, and Cardinal Manning, and it is plain that Mr. Lowell's success was a foregone conclusion. With what were, until within a few years, the two ruling classes of England — the hereditary aristocracy and the literary class — Mr. Lowell's popularity went as far as it could go."

Mose Coit Tyler pays to Lowell the diplomatist, a fine tribute when he calls him a "bridge-builder between the two countries": —

"Both in England and in America, one meets people who, in their dread of the ocean, are accustomed to say that they are deferring the Atlantic trip till they can make it over a bridge. Well, let them have courage. Between these two lands now, I am sure a bridge is building at last — not of stone or iron or even of gold, but of better acquaintance, of honest respect, of solid love, the

vast, immutable piers of it resting on an instinct of proud and splendid kinship. Perhaps that bridge may not be finished in our day. Such structures take time. But at any rate, it is actually begun. It will be finished ; and, as I believe, long generations of brethren and faithful friends will pass and re-pass upon it ; and all mankind will be the happier for its existence. For my part, however, I doubt if any one has yet done more to lay the piers of that goodly structure, or to shape the curve of its indestructible arches than Lowell the diplomatist, who, with gifts and powers not conferred by his letters of instruction, so bore himself in his foreign mission as to make that mission no longer to us a foreign one. Indeed, who so well as Lowell has helped to fulfill the imperious prediction of his own ‘Moniment’ :

“ ‘She an’ Columby’s gut to be fas’ friends.’ ”

But it was not only as a diplomatist that England received our accomplished minister : —

“ Essayist, poet, satirist, critic, lecturer, professor, diplomatist, man of the world, of letters, and of affairs, Lowell is, as Mr. Stedman says, the representative of American literature. In him are combined the ripe scholarship and varied

learning of Parson Wilbur, with the shrewd mother-wit and sound common sense of Hosea Biglow. He sums up the best qualities of the refined and cultured Americans. He has outlived the Vandalism and illiberal fanaticism of the Puritans, and yet retains the religious resolve and fighting spirit which at Naseby swept the chaff from the threshing-floor of the Lord."

So writes an English critic in the *Quarterly Review*, and adds therewith the following eulogiums upon the poems of Lowell:—

"From the very first his poetry was marked by an ambitious purpose and a high ideal of his art. Love was indeed the inspiration of 'A Year's Life,' which he published in 1841, with the motto from Schiller, 'Ich habe gelebt und geliebet.' But this youthful volume was followed in 1844 by poems in which the tender notes are blended with sturdier tones. Already he raises his voice to plead for freedom or dignify the heritage of the poor. He was determined to be —

" . . . no empty rhymers  
Who lies with idle elbow on the grass,  
And fits his singing, like a cunning timer.  
To all men's pride and fancies as they pass."

"A similar strain appears in the following lines:—

“ ‘Never did poesy appear  
So full of heaven to me, as when  
I saw how it would pierce through pride and fear  
To the lives of common men.’

“ Or again, in the words which he puts in the mouth of Hosea Biglow :—

“ ‘Ef I a song or two could make,  
Like rockets druv by their own burnin,’  
All leap an’ light, to leave a wake  
Men’s hearts an’ faces skyward turnin’.’

“ His theory of the choice of themes also impelled him to active life. He held that the Muse never reveals herself to the man who pursues her with prying eyes and panting breath, but seeks out for herself the favored lovers, in whose ears she whispers subjects which, as Lowell writes —

“ ‘By day or night won’t let me be,  
And hang about me like a curse,  
Till they have made me into verse.’

“ With this aim and ideal before him, his poetry has always been characterized by manly earnestness and strong religious feeling. He aspires not to conceive exquisite creations of the fancy which might charm the dilettante, but to speak the

simple words that waken their free nature in the poor and friendless.

“His descriptive poetry reaches a high standard of excellence. Nothing better of its kind has been produced in America. His touches are bold and sharp, his outlines never blurred; the vision is reproduced as it actually appeared to an acute and careful observer. He has followed the footsteps of Nature in all her moods and disguises with the devotion of a lover; he does not study her movements like a philosopher; his enjoyment of her beauty is fresh and spontaneous as a child's. Hence his descriptive verse glows with a fresh summer coloring which puts to shame the autumnal faded tints of Bryant. His fancy is more iridescent than that of Wordsworth. The ripple of gayety, which ruffles the depths of spiritual feeling, imparts a marvellous charm and variety to his poetry. Nature possesses him, not he Nature; Wordsworth finds Nature mirrored in his own heart; Lowell sees himself reflected in Nature:—

“‘I was the wind that dapples the lush grass,  
The tide that crept with coolness to its roots,  
The thin-winged swallow skating on the air.’



In other words, he lets himself swoon away on the breast of Nature, and merges in hers his own per-

sonality. The lofty rapture, the strong, single-hearted joy of Wordsworth belongs to a higher kind of poetry. But it is obvious that Lowell's more sensuous feeling enables him to depict Nature with a greater directness than the more subjective and brooding passion of the English poet will allow. In the unfailing freshness of his illustrations, the local truth of his descriptive touches, the rich catholicity of his acquirements, the solid basis of his practical understanding, Lowell combines, as has been said, the best qualities of his class. He stands, in our opinion, first among the American poets of culture. To him America owes her finest satire, her noblest ode, and her truest descriptive poetry,"

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### LOWELL AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

WHEN the bust of Samuel Taylor Coleridge was unveiled in Westminster Abbey, Lowell was invited to deliver the panegyric.

Previous to the ceremony of the unveiling of the bust, a preliminary gathering was held in the Chapter House. Dean Bradley and Mr. Lowell entered the Chapter House arm in arm. The dean made a short speech, in which he said he heartily sympathized with the object of the meeting. He paid a high tribute to Mr. Lowell, and said that he was eminently fitted to perform the duty of unveiling the statue. The ceremony, he said, would add another link to the many that already bound together England and America.

Mr. Lowell replied that he preferred that the task of unveiling the statue had been trusted to worthier hands, but the fact that the bust is a gift of the late Rev. Dr. Mercier of Rhode Island, through his executrix, Mrs. Pell, supplied that argument of fitness which would otherwise have



been absent. He continued: "All the waters of the Atlantic cannot wash out of the consciousness of either nation that we hold our intellectual property in common. The literary traditions and fame of those who shed lustre upon our race remain an undivided inheritance. Coleridge's works are a companion and teacher in the happiest hours of our youth, and in old age recall the radiant image of youth which we have lost. Surely there are no friends so constant as poets. Among them none are more faithful than Coleridge. Just fifty-one years ago I became possessed of a pirated American reprint of Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, and I trust I may be pardoned for the delight I took in it. Coleridge was a metaphysical teacher and interpreter whose services are incalculable."

Mr. Lowell said he admired especially the "Ancient Mariner," far more indeed than "Christabel." Mr. Coleridge was a man of artless simplicity, and yet a finished scholar, although not exact. He owed much to the poetry of others, but most to his own native genius. He was picturesque in the best sense of the term. Mr. Lowell concluded, "This is neither the time nor place to speak of Coleridge's conduct to himself, his family or the world. He left behind him a great name. Let those who are blameless cast the first stone at one

who might have been better had he possessed those business faculties which make man respectable. He left us such a legacy as only genius, and genius not always, can leave."

Lord Coleridge returned thanks on behalf of the family. The assemblage then went to the Poets' Corner, and Mr. Lowell formally unveiled the statue, which bears the simple inscription, "Samuel Taylor Coleridge."

A well-known American writer referring to this eulogy upon Coleridge says:—

"To say that Mr. Lowell's address at the unveiling of the Coleridge bust in Westminster Abbey has distinctly bettered expectation, is perhaps the most forcible compliment that could be paid it. No one questioned the fitness, under the circumstances, of inviting Mr. Lowell to perform this task, and no one doubted that the speaker would rise fully to the occasion. But Mr. Lowell might have done this and still not have paid so just and so comprehensive a tribute to the genius of a man who, though often admired and even idolized, has, on the whole, been misunderstood by his admirers. The 'mania for moral dissection,' as it has been called, has led aside Coleridge's critics from the discussion of what he did, to speculation as to what he might have done. But a truer standard

of criticism demands that ability shall be judged, not by its lowest, but by its highest achievement. Mr. Lowell, therefore, does well to dismiss with a few words Coleridge's efforts in metaphysics, and to judge him only by his purely literary work. In a study of the mind and art of the man, this would of course be an inadequate method of investigation; in an estimate of his permanent place in literature, however, it fulfils every essential condition.

"It would be superfluous to comment in detail upon an address which our readers have already had the opportunity to read in full. But this point, at least, may fitly be emphasized. While Mr. Lowell claims for Coleridge a high place among the imaginative writers of the world, he yet indirectly admits upon what a slender footing that claim must stand. Leave out 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel,' and Coleridge would to-day be a half-forgotten name. Of course he did much more that was of value to the world than write these two poems. As Mr. Lowell says, 'he certainly was a main influence in showing the English mind how it could emancipate itself from the vulgarizing tyranny of common sense.' And in criticism, also, he did indeed do 'incalculable service.' But his magnitude in

the intellectual firmament depends primarily upon his position as a poet. Mr. Lowell has too large a share of that best gift of the critic—the sense of humor—to emphasize unduly the weaker and poorer side of Coleridge's literary character. Coleridge was able to sail on the deep sea of literature, but after one successful voyage he was content to paddle among the shallows. Over this pitiable trifling with unusual talents, Mr. Lowell properly draws a veil. The mental procrastination, the idling away of intellectual powers, does not lessen the value of what is really accomplished. 'Nothing is more certain,' says Mr. Lowell, 'than that our personal weaknesses exact the utmost farthing of penalty from us while we live.' There is little need of posterity to inculcate moral lessons by pointing the finger of scorn.

"One excuse for Coleridge, which Mr. Lowell, singularly enough, does not mention, will be found in the influence which Wordsworth exerted upon him. It was, upon the whole, harmful. The business faculty, which, according to Mr. Lowell, makes Wordsworth 'so almost irritatingly respectable,' could not be acquired by Coleridge. Wordsworth's habit of thought was one which he could not emulate and ought not to have followed. Wordsworth gave impetus to Coleridge at one period and

another of indecision ; but, on the other hand, he depressed his finely imaginative spirit, and led him away from the poetry in which he was easily master to the philosophy in which he was at best imitator and disciple. Coleridge was unfortunate in temper and habits. But he was also unfortunate in the friendships and the conditions of his career."

## CHAPTER XV.

### LOWELL AT ST. OLAVES.

WHEN at the old church of St. Olaves in London a memorial was dedicated to Samuel Pepys, our Minister Lowell was again called upon to deliver the address.

“Lowell said he felt himself embarrassed by the weight of unexpected responsibility left on his shoulders by the absence of Lord Northbrook. For himself, he was glad to come there to say a few words — particularly glad, indeed, to come on occasions like that ; and he should have been glad if the first lord had been present, for he should then have had the opportunity of expressing publicly the high appreciation of the American Government and people at the graceful act lately performed by the British Government in the gift of the ship *Alert*. It was proper, His Excellency said, that he should read a note he had received from Lord Northbrook. This was dated that day from the Admiralty, and was as follows : —

MY DEAR MR. LOWELL:

I am very much annoyed that I am prevented from assisting at the ceremony to-day. It would be very good if you would say that nothing but very urgent business would have kept me away. I am anxious to give my testimony to the merits of Pepys as an admiralty official, leaving his literary merits to you. He was concerned with the administration of the navy from the Restoration to the Revolution, and from 1673 as secretary. I believe his merits to be fairly stated in a contemporary account, which I send.

Yours very truly,

NORTHBROOK.

The contemporary account which Lord Northbrook was good enough to send him, said:—

“ ‘ Pepys was, without exception, the greatest and most useful minister that ever filled the same situations in England, the acts and registers of the admiralty proving this beyond contradiction. The principal rules and establishments in present use in these offices are well known to have been of his introducing, and most of the officers serving therein since the Restoration of his bringing up. He was a most studious promoter and strenuous asserter of order and discipline. Sobriety, diligence, capacity, loyalty and subjection to command were essentials required in all whom he advanced. Where any of these were found wanting, no interest or authority was capable of moving him in favor of the highest pretender. Discharg-

ing his duty to his prince and country with a religious application and perfect integrity, he feared no one, courted no one, and neglected his own fortune.'

"That was a character drawn, it was true, by a friendly hand, but to those who were familiar with the life of Pepys the description hardly seemed an exaggerated one. But, as regarded his official life, it was unnecessary to dilate upon his peculiar characteristics in this respect, for all knew how faithful he was in his official duties, and all knew, too, how many faithful officials there were working on in obscurity, who were not only never honored with a monument, but who never expected one. The few words, Mr. Lowell went on to remark, which he was expected to say upon that occasion, therefore, referred rather to what he believed was the true motive which had brought that assembly together, and that was not merely the character of Pepys either as clerk to the Acts or as secretary to the Admiralty. That was not the place in which one could go into a very close examination of the character of Pepys as a private man. He would begin by admitting that Pepys was a type, perhaps, of what was now called a 'Philistine.' We had no word in England which was equivalent to the French word *bourgeois*; but,



at all events, Samuel Pepys was the most perfect type that ever existed of the class of people whom this word described. He had all its merits as well as many of its defects. With all those defects, however, — into which it was there unnecessary to go, — Pepys had written one of the most delightful books that it was man's privilege to read in the English language or in any other. Whether Pepys intended this diary to be afterwards read by the general public or not — and this was a doubtful question when it was considered that he had left, possibly by inadvertence, a key to his cipher behind him — it was certain that he had left with us a most delightful picture.

“ ‘ His love of dress, his credulity, his meanness, as well as his generosity and his want of imaginative faculty,’ were all mentioned as among the faults of Samuel Pepys. These, it was true, were serious charges, but as regarded the statement of Pepys’ want of the imaginative faculty, it was to be remembered that had the author of the favorite diary been possessed to any great extent of this undoubtedly important faculty, his journal would never have possessed the charm to thousands of its readers of being so thoroughly ingenuous. Still, even with some of those faults admitted, one could not afford to banish Pepys,

and, the speaker continued, such a suggestion called to mind the passage in Shakespeare's play of 'King Henry IV.' when Falstaff was on his trial. His hearers would remember that when the suggestion was made that Jack Falstaff should be banished, the fat knight made remark, 'No, my good lord, banish Peto, banish Bardolph, banish Poins; but for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant, being, as he is, old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy Harry's company. Banish plump Jack, and banish all the world.' And the prince, in reply, said, 'I do, I will.' He could not help thinking that they had a somewhat similar train of thought in connection with Pepys as Falstaff raised in defence of himself. If one were to ask what were the reasons for liking Pepys, it would be found that they were as numerous as the days upon which he entered his diary, and surely that was sufficient argument in his favor. There was no book, Mr. Lowell said, that he knew of, or that occurred to his memory, with which Pepys' Diary could fairly be compared, and the book was certainly unique in one respect, and that was the absolute sincerity of the author with himself. The very fact of that sincerity of the author with himself argued a certain greatness of character.

Dr. Hicks, who attended Pepys at his death-bed, spoke of him as 'this great man,' and said he knew no one who died so greatly. And yet there was something almost of the ridiculous in the statement when the 'greatness' was compared with the absolute frankness which Pepys showed towards himself. There was no parallel of character to that of Pepys, he believed, in respect of naïveté, unless it were found in the character of Falstaff, and Pepys showed himself, too, to have a nature which was thoroughly intimate with himself. Falstaff had just the same naïveté; but in Falstaff it was the naïveté of conscious humorousness. But in Pepys it was quite different, for Pepys naïveté was the honest frankness of a man who thoroughly knew himself. Falstaff had a sense, too, of inadvertent humor, but it was questionable whether Pepys had a sense of humor at all, and he certainly had very little sense of wit. There was probably, however, more involuntary humor in Pepys' diary than there was in any other book extant. When he told his readers of the landing of Charles II. at Dover, for instance, it would be remembered how Pepys chronicled the fact that the mayor of Dover presented the prince with a Bible, for which he returned his thanks and said it was the 'most precious book to him in the world.' Then, again,

it would be remembered that he received a letter addressed 'Samuel Pepys, Esq.,' and confessed in the diary that this pleased him mightily. When, too, he kissed his cook's maid, he confessed he was not sorry for it, but he was sorry that the foot-boy of a worthy knight with whom he was acquainted saw him do it. And a last instance he would mention of poor Pepys' naïveté was when he said in the diary that he could not help feeling a certain pleasant and satisfied feeling when Barlow died. Barlow, it must be remembered, received, during his life, the yearly sum from Pepys of £100. The value of Pepys' book was simply priceless, and while there was nothing in it approaching that single page in St. Simon where he described that swarm of red-heeled creatures passing from one part of the palace to another as the prince was lying on his deathbed, and the source of favor was lying in the balance, still Pepys' diary was unequalled for the peculiar reasons he had described. The lightest part of the diary was of value, historically, for it enabled one to see London of two hundred years ago, and, what was more, to see it with the eyes of Pepys. It was not Pepys the official who had brought that large gathering together that day in honor of his memory; it was Pepys the diarist. As to all the charges which

had been brought against Pepys, Mr. Lowell said if they could not altogether acquit him, they could punish him with the slightest possible penalty ; and probably the heaviest penalty which was now laid upon departed greatness was a statue."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE LONGFELLOW MEMORIAL AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

ON Longfellow's birthday, the twenty-seventh of February, 1867, Lowell had written :—

“ With loving breath of all the winds his name  
Is blown about the world, but to his friends  
A sweeter secret hides behind his fame,  
And Love steals shyly through the loud acclaim  
To murmur a God bless you ! and there ends.”

“ There was a peculiar fitness in the author of the above, as the representative of the English-speaking nations, giving voice to the sentiments naturally suggested by an occasion so memorable as the uncovering of Longfellow's statue in Westminster Abbey. He has supplied the tie that binds the educated classes of England with those on this side of the Atlantic, and therein secured an influence never exerted but for the advancement of American interests. Mr. Lowell's mission to Victoria's court was to smooth down prejudice, while conquering asperity, to the end of uniting

England and the United States in such bonds of friendly feeling that no sudden gusts of passion can sweep them away. What a powerful element for that object, though working silently, has been his high repute abroad as a man of extensive culture and great literary achievement ! The fact of Longfellow's 'animated bust' having been placed in Westminster Abbey is hardly more noteworthy than the circumstance that in the grand march of events it became James Russell Lowell's duty and privilege—so long a townsman, friend and admirer of the great American poet, and, like him, having won undisputed eminence on fields where fancy and imagination roam without constraint—to be the central figure in services attesting the unlimited respect that all Englishmen worthy of the name pay to intellectual superiority wherever displayed."

The following interesting account of the Longfellow Memorial Services at Westminster Abbey is given by an eye witness :—

"Previous to the ceremony of unveiling a bust of Longfellow in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, on the 1st inst., a meeting of the subscribers was held in Jerusalem Chamber. In the absence of Dean Bradley, owing to a death in his family, the sub-dean was called to the chair.

“After a brief statement by Dr. Dennett, Earl Granville presented the bust to the sub-dean.

“Minister Lowell then said : ‘ Mr. Sub-Dean, my lords, ladies and gentlemen — I think I may take upon myself the responsibility, in the name of the daughters of my beloved friend, to express their gratitude to Lord Granville for having found time amid the continuous and arduous calls of his duty to be present here this morning. Having occasion to speak in this place some two years ago, I remember that I then expressed the hope that some day or other the Abbey of Westminster would become the Valhalla of the whole English-speaking race. I little expected then that a beginning would be made so soon — a beginning at once painful and gratifying in the highest degree to myself — with the bust of my friend. Though there be no academy in England which corresponds to that of France, yet admission to Westminster Abbey forms a sort of posthumous test of literary eminence perhaps as effectual. Every one of us has his own private Valhalla, and it is not apt to be populous. But the conditions of admission to the Abbey are very different. We ought no longer to ask why is so-and-so here, and we ought always to be able to answer the question why such a one is not here. I think that on this occasion I should express the united



feeling of the whole English-speaking race in confirming the choice which has been made — the choice of one whose name is dear to them all, who has inspired their lives and consoled their hearts, and who has been admitted to the fireside of all of them as a familiar friend. Nearly forty years ago I had occasion, in speaking of Mr. Longfellow, to suggest an analogy between him and the English poet Gray, and I have never since seen any reason to modify or change that opinion. There are certain very marked analogies between them, I think. In the first place there is the same love of a certain subdued splendor not inconsistent with transparency of diction ; there is the same power of absorbing and assimilating the beauties of other literature without loss of originality ; and above all there is that genius, that sympathy with universal sentiments and the power of expressing them so that they come home to everybody, both high and low, which characterize both poets. There is something also in that simplicity — simplicity in itself being a distinction ; but in style, simplicity and distinction must be combined in order to their proper effect, and the only warrant perhaps of permanence in literature is this distinction in style. It is something quite indefinable, it is something like the distinction of good breeding, characterized

rather by the absence of certain negative qualities than by the presence of certain positive ones, but it seems to me that distinction of style is eminently found in the poet whom we are met here in some sense to celebrate to-day. This is not the place of course for criticism, still less is it the place for eulogy, for eulogy is but too often disguised apology. But I have been struck particularly — if I may bring forward one instance — with some of my late friend's sonnets, which seem to me to be some of the most beautiful and perfect we have in the language. They remind me of one of those cabinets which I have sometimes seen, in which many of the drawers are unlocked by a single key. I have seen sonnets in which there is a separate lock for every line, and after fumbling among our fourteen keys we sometimes find ourselves in certain confusion. Added to this there would be sometimes a conundrum of secret drawers. But there was nothing of this in him. His mind always moved straight towards its object, and was always permeated with the emotion that gave it frankness and sincerity, and at the same time the most ample expression. It seems that I should add a few words, in fact I cannot refrain from adding a few words, with regard to the personal character of a man whom I knew for more than forty years, and whose friend

I was honored to call myself for thirty years. Never was a private character more answerable to public performance than that of Longfellow. Never have I known a more beautiful character. I was familiar with it daily—with the constant charity of his hand and of his mind. His nature was consecrated ground, into which no unclean spirit could ever enter. I feel entirely how inadequate anything that I can say is to the measure and proportion of an occasion like this. But I think I am authorized to accept in the name of the American people this tribute to not the least distinguished of her sons, to a man who in every way, both in public and in private, did honor to the country that gave him birth. I cannot add anything more to what was so well said in a few words by Lord Granville, for I do not think that these occasions are precisely the occasions for set discourses, but rather for a few words of feeling, of gratitude and of appreciation.'

"The sub-dean, in accepting the bust, remarked that it was impossible not to feel in doing so they were accepting a very great honor to the country. A vote of thanks to the secretary and treasurer of the memorial fund was passed and the company then proceeded to the Poets' Corner, where, after brief remarks by the sub-dean, the covering

was removed from the bust and the ceremony ended."

The inscription upon this bust of Longfellow reads as follows :—

"This bust was placed among the memorials of the poets of England by the English admirers of an American poet."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### ADDRESS ON DEMOCRACY.

ON the sixth of October, 1884, Lowell, as President of the Midland Institute, in Birmingham, England, was invited to deliver the inaugural address. He chose for his subject, "Democracy," and from this fine address the following quotations are taken : —

"I have grown to manhood, and am now growing old with the growth of this system of government of my native land, have watched its advances, or what some would call its encroachments, gradual and irresistible as those of a glacier, have been an ear witness to the forebodings of wise and good and timid men, and have lived to see those forebodings belied by the course of events, which is apt to show itself humorously careless of the reputation of prophets. I recollect hearing a sagacious old gentleman say in 1840 that the doing away with the property qualification for suffrage twenty years before had been the ruin of the State of Massachusetts ; that it had put public credit and

private estate alike at the mercy of demagogues. I lived to see that Commonwealth twenty odd years later paying the interest on her bonds in gold, though it cost her sometimes nearly three for one to keep her faith, and that while suffering an unparalleled drain of men and treasure in helping to sustain the unity and self-respect of the nation. I hear America sometimes playfully accused of sending you all your storms, and am in the habit of parrying the charge by alleging that we are enabled to do this because, in virtue of our protective system, we can afford to make better bad weather than anybody else. And what wiser use could we make of it than to export it in return for the paupers which some European countries are good enough to send over to us who have not attained to the same skill in the manufacture of them?"

Further on he says:—

"Formerly the immense majority of men—our brothers—knew only their sufferings, their wants and their desires. They are beginning now to know their opportunity and their power. All persons who see deeper than their plates are rather inclined to thank God for it than to bewail it, for the sores of Lazarus have a poison in them against which Dives has no antidote.

“There can be no doubt that the spectacle of a great and prosperous democracy on the other side of the Atlantic must react powerfully on the aspirations and political theories of men in the Old World who do not find things to their mind; but whether for good or evil, it should not be overlooked that the acorn from which it sprang was ripened on the British oak. Every successive swarm that has gone out from this *officina gentium* has, when left to its own instincts—may I not call them hereditary instincts?—assumed a more or less thoroughly democratic form. This would seem to show what I believe to be the fact, that the British constitution, under whatever disguises of prudence or decorum, is essentially democratic. People are continually saying that America is in the air, and I am glad to think it is, since this means only that a clearer conception of human claims and human duties is beginning to be prevalent. The discontent with the existing order of things, however, pervaded the atmosphere wherever the conditions were favorable, long before Columbus, seeking the back door of Asia, found himself knocking at the front door of America. I say wherever the conditions were favorable, for it is certain that the germs of disease do not stick or find a prosperous field for their development and

noxious activity unless where the simplest sanitary precautions have been neglected."

Speaking a word for the Irish-American, he exclaims :—

"We have taken from Europe the poorest, the most ignorant, the most turbulent of her people, and have made them over into good citizens who have added to our wealth, and who are ready to die in defence of a country and of institutions which they know to be worth dying for. The exceptions have been (and they are lamentable exceptions) where these hordes of ignorance and poverty have coagulated in great cities. But the social system is yet to seek which has not to look the same terrible wolf in the eyes. On the other hand, at this very moment Irish peasants are buying up the worn-out farms of Massachusetts, and making them productive again by the same virtues of industry and thrift that once made them profitable to the English ancestors of the men who are deserting them. To have achieved even these prosaic results (if you choose to call them so), and that out of materials the most discordant, I might say the most recalcitrant, argues a certain beneficent virtue in the system that could do it, and is not to be accounted for by mere luck."

In defining democracy he says :—



“We should remember that nothing is more natural for people whose education has been neglected than to spell evolution with an initial ‘r.’ A great man struggling with the storms of fate has been called a sublime spectacle; but surely a great man wrestling with these new forces that have come into the world, mastering them and controlling them to beneficent ends, would be a yet sublimer. Here is not a danger, and if there were it would be only a better school of manhood, a nobler scope for ambition. I have hinted that what people are afraid of in democracy is less the thing itself than what they conceive to be its necessary adjuncts and consequences. It is supposed to reduce all mankind to a dead level of mediocrity in character and culture, to vulgarize men’s conceptions of life, and therefore their code of morals, manners and conduct—to endanger the rights of property and possession. But I believe that the real gravamen of the charges lies in the habit it has of making itself generally disagreeable by asking the powers that be, at the most inconvenient moment, whether they are the powers that ought to be. If the powers that be are in a condition to give a satisfactory answer to this inevitable question, they need feel in no way discomfited by it.

“Few people take the trouble of trying to find out what democracy really is. Yet this would be a great help, for it is our lawless and uncertain thoughts, it is indefiniteness of our impressions, that fill darkness, whether mental or physical, with spectres and hobgoblins. Democracy is nothing more than an experiment in government, more likely to succeed in a new soil, but likely to be tried in all soils, which must stand or fall on its own merits as others have done before it. For there is no trick of perpetual motion in politics any more than in mechanics. President Lincoln defined democracy to be ‘the government of the people, by the people, for the people.’ This is a sufficiently compact statement of it as a political arrangement. Theodore Parker said that ‘Democracy meant not “I’m as good as you are,” but “you’re as good as I am.”’ And this is the ethical conception of it, necessary as the complement of the other; a conception which, could it be made actual and practical, would easily solve all the riddles that the old sphinx of political and social economy who sits by the roadside has been proposing to mankind from the beginning, and which mankind have such a singular talent for answering wrongly. In this sense Christ was the first true democrat that ever breathed, as the old dramatist Dekker said he was

the first true gentleman. The characters may be easily doubled, so strong is the likeness between them. A beautiful and profound parable of the Persian poet, Jelâl-ed-Deen, tells us that 'One knocked at the Beloved's door, and a voice asked from within, "Who is there?" and he answered, "It is I." Then the voice answered, "This house will not hold thee and me'; and the door was not opened. Then went the lover into the desert and fasted and prayed in solitude, and after a year he returned and knocked again at the door, and again the voice asked, "Who is there?" and he said, "It is thyself"; and the door was opened to him.' But that is idealism, you will say, and this is an only too practical world. I grant it; but I am one of those who believe that the real will never find an irremovable basis till it rests on the ideal."

Referring to this address upon "Democracy," a certain American writer says:—

"Considering Mr. Lowell's representative character, added to his individual standing in society and letters, this enunciation by him of an important truth, patent to almost everybody conversant with the inclination of affairs on the other side of the Atlantic, must have a marked effect upon cultivated Europeans. Lowell's genial, semi-humorous mode of conveying important revelations

disarms them of the power of creating offence, and therefore invests them with a subtler yet wider influence. He didn't fail of making his meaning clear to the Birmingham audience that the American republic was gradually rooting out all the anti-democratic features of the British constitution. Yet he sugar-coated the pill, as it were, by ascribing to this instrument essentially democratic qualities. How much more politic and effective this was than would have been a slap-dash assault on the monarchy and the titled families ! Mr. Lowell in this surely gives no indication of having lost his balance because of the flattering attentions he has received from what are denominated the higher classes of England ; courtesies which, it must be said, reflected honor upon those bestowing them, as they attested their exalted estimate of Lowell for his achievements in the domain of letters. Lowell does not pose as a violent propagandist of American governmental ideas. But none the less will his inculcation of democracy steal into the public sentiment of Great Britain, and remain there to assist in modifying and finally eradicating the aristocratic features of the British constitution."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### ENGLAND'S FAREWELL TO LOWELL.

THE announcement that President Cleveland had appointed Mr. Phelps to succeed James Russell Lowell as ambassador at the court of St. James, was received in England with universal regret.

Said the London Times :—

“It might have been well for the relations of the two countries had Mr. Lowell been permitted permanently to retain his post as United States minister in England. It is no disparagement to his successor, whoever he may be, to say that he cannot well be to either country all that Mr. Lowell has been.”

The Daily News observed :—

“We have no doubt that Mr. Phelps, whose name Mr. Cleveland has submitted to the Senate, deserves all that our New York correspondent says in his favor. But the satisfaction with which we shall welcome the coming guest is less than the

sorrow with which we shall speed the parting one. Mr. Lowell has been in more than a diplomatic sense the representative of his country in ours. He has been, to speak in terms of Greek usage, a sort of guest-friend of England. He has been the representative of what is best in American culture and in American literature."

Lowell, in finishing his speech at the unveiling of the bust of Gray at Pembroke College, Cambridge, England, said that "this would, in all probability, be the last occasion on which he would have the opportunity of addressing Englishmen in public. He wished, therefore, to express his most heartfelt gratitude for the kindness which had surrounded him for the last four years in his official and in his private life, and had made both delightful. He had come among them as a far-away cousin, and they were sending him away as something very like a brother."

Whereupon "Punch" replies:—

"Send *you* away? No, Lowell, no,  
That phrase, indeed, is scarce well chosen.  
We're glad, of course, to have you go  
More like a brother than a cousin;  
True, we must "speed the parting guest,"  
If such a guest from us *must* sever,  
But what we all should like the best  
Would be to keep you here for ever.

“ You’ve won our hearts ; your words, your ways,  
 Are what we like. Without desiring  
 To sicken you with fulsome praise,  
 We think you’ve seen no signs of tiring.  
 Of graceful speech, of pleasant lore,  
 How much to you the English mind owes !  
 We’re sad to think we’ll see no more  
 Of you — save through your *Study Windows*.

“ Well, well, the best of friends must part ;  
 That’s ‘ commonplace,’ like Gray, but true, sir.  
 Commend us to the Yankee heart.  
 If you *can* come again, why, *do*, sir.  
 What *Biglow* calls our ‘ English sarse’  
 Is not *all* tarts and bitters, is it ?  
 Farewell ! — if from us you *must* pass,  
 But try, *do* try, another visit !”

The following is an extract from the address delivered by James Jussell Lowell on the occasion of the unveiling of the bust of the poet Gray in the hall of Pembroke College, Cambridge, England :—

“ I have been asked to say a few words, but they must be very few, as the train is waiting for me that takes me back to keep an engagement. Mr. Gosse has told you he has been present at many memorial unveilings, and the newspapers inform me that I also have been present at the unveiling of perhaps too many. But never have I been present on any occasion with more pleasure than

on this. You have now, in the words which Lord Houghton quoted, and which I would extend in a wider sense than he did, a beautiful memorial to Gray in permanent form. We also, thanks to Mr. Gosse, possess a photograph of this memorial in permanent form. But we have in our hearts and memories, I think, a memorial to the man quite as true and quite as permanent — that is, permanent for us. Very few words are fitting on an occasion which commemorates the one of the English poets who has written less and pleased more, perhaps, than any other. There is a certain appropriateness in my speaking here to-day. I come here to speak simply as the representative of several countrymen and countrywomen of mine who have renewed that affirmation which I like always to renew of the unity of our English race by giving something more solid than words in commemoration of the poet they loved. And I think there is another claim which I perhaps have for speaking here to-day, and that is that the most picturesque anecdote relative to the life of Gray — perhaps the most picturesque related of the life of any poet, certainly of any English poet — belongs to the Western hemisphere. I mean the anecdote which connects the name of Wolfe with that of Gray. Nothing could have been more picturesque than the sur-



roundings of that saying of Wolfe's—of that English hero—and nothing could have been more momentous than the action and the consequence that followed from it, and which made the United States, which I have lately represented, possible. That, I think, gives me a certain right also to speak here. I know that sometimes criticisms are made upon Gray. I think I have often heard him called by some of our juniors 'commonplace.' Upon my word, I think it a compliment. I think it shows a certain generality of application in what Gray has done, for if there is one thing more than another—I say this to the young men whom I see seated around both sides of the hall—which insures the lead in life, it is the commonplace. I have to measure my poets, my authors, by their lasting power, and I find Gray has a great deal of it. He not only pleases my youth and my age, but he pleases other people's youth and age, and I cannot help thinking this is a proof that he touches on human nature at a great many periods and at a great many levels, and, perhaps, that is as high a compliment as can be paid to the poet. There is, I admit, a certain commonplaceness of sentiment in his most famous poem, but I think there is also a certain commonplaceness of sentiment in some verses that have been famous for more than three

thousand years. I think that when Homer saw somebody smiling through her tears he said, on the whole, a commonplace thing, but it touched our feelings for a great many centuries, and I think that in the 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard' Gray has expressed a simple sentiment, and as long as there are young men and middle-aged men Gray's poem will continue to be read and loved as in the days when it was written. There is a Spanish proverb which rebukes those people who ask something better than bread. Let those who ask for something better get something better than what Gray produced. For my own part, I ask nothing better. He was, perhaps, the greatest artist in words that English literature has possessed. In conclusion, let me say one word for myself. This will probably be the last occasion on which I shall have the opportunity of addressing Englishmen in public; and I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude for the kindness which has surrounded me both in my official and private life, and to say that while I came here as a far-off cousin, I feel you are sending me away as something like a brother."

The following is the passage in Lord Houghton's speech referred to by Mr. Lowell: —

"It was in 1771 that Dr. Brown wrote a letter

which I read in the library of the British Museum. It contains these words : ‘ Everything is now dark and melancholy in Mr. Gray’s rooms. Not a trace of him remains there. But the thoughts I have of him will last and be useful to me in the few years I can expect to live. He never spoke out.’ ”

Just before his departure for America, a deputation from the “ Workmen’s Peace Association,” headed by Mr. W. R. Cremer, waited upon Mr. Lowell at his official residence, for the purpose of presenting an address to him.

In reply, Mr. Lowell said :—

“ I have been exceedingly touched latterly by the kindness which I have received here in England from all classes, but never have I been more profoundly touched than by the deputation which has now waited upon me to express the kind wishes of the English workingmen. I have twice had the pleasure of addressing workingmen since I have been in England, and I have been gratified to find that, among all the audiences to whom I have spoken, there were none more intelligent. They were exceedingly quick to catch all points, and exceedingly agreeable to talk to. You must not think that I have forgotten the part taken by the workingmen of England during our Civil War—I won’t say on behalf of the North, because now we

are a united people — on the side of good order and freedom, and on the only occasion when I had an opportunity of saying so — that was when speaking to the provincial press in London — I alluded to the subject. I agree with you entirely in the importance of a good understanding, and much more between England and the United States and between the two chief branches of the Anglo-Saxon race. I think you exaggerate a good deal my own merit in relation to anything of that sort, but I have always had a feeling about me that a war between the two countries would be a civil war, and I believe a cordial understanding between them to be absolutely essential, not only to the progress of reasonable liberty, but its preservation and its extension to other races. It is a particular pleasure to me on another account to meet English workmen. I notice that, however ardent they may be in their aspirations, and however theoretical on some points, they are always reasonable. The individual man may set the impossible before him as something to be obtained, but I think those communities of men have prospered the best who have aimed at what is possible. We see daily illustrations of that, and anybody who has studied the history of France would be convinced that though England has a form of

government not so free as that country, yet you have made a greater advance towards good will among men, and towards peace, than France has done. I do not wish you to suppose that I am out of sympathy with what I call the French Revolution—although I consider it an enormous misfortune which might have been prevented, and France saved from many evil consequences that followed—but the manner in which it took place we ought all to regard. Since I have been in England I have done something, I trust, to promote a cordial feeling between this country and the United States. That has been my earnest desire always, and I hope I have to some extent succeeded. You will allow me to thank you warmly for this address, which I shall always feel to be among my most precious possessions, and I shall carry to the workmen on the other side of the Atlantic the message expressive of your sympathy and hope. I hope the occasion will not ever arise, even for arbitration. I think if we can talk together face to face we shall be able to settle all differences. I am certain that the relations between the two countries are now of a most amicable and friendly kind, and I am equally sure that my successor is as strongly impressed as I could be with the necessity of strengthening those

friendly relations. I trust the necessity for arbitration may never arise between us ; I do not think it will. You will again allow me to give you my most hearty and profound thanks for the kindness you have done me, and to wish you all manner of prosperity. I trust also that that reign of peace to which you allude may come soon and last long. I appreciate extremely what Mr. Cremer said as to your sympathy with the Northern States in the Civil War, with whom no one could help sympathizing if they went to the root of the matter. I believe in peace as strongly as any man can do, but I believe also that there are occasions when war is less disastrous than peace ; that there are times when one must resort to what goes before all law, and what, indeed, forms the foundation of it — the law of the strongest ; and that, as a general rule, the strongest deserve to get the best of the struggle. They say, satirically, that God is on the side of the strong battalions, but I think they are sometimes in the right, and my experience goes to prove that.

“The deputation then withdrew. The address, engrossed on vellum, is to be transmitted to Mr. Lowell in America.”

The following is the text of the reply of James Russell Lowell to the address forwarded to him by the mayor of Worcester, England : —

MR. MAYOR AND GENTLEMEN:—

While I cannot but feel highly honored by the beautiful proof you have just given me that I am not forgotten by the ever-faithful city, I value even more the kindly sentiment which prompted it, and to which you have given such graceful expression. I am well aware that it is to what I represent far more than to any merit of my own that I owe this distinction, and that consciousness makes it doubly grateful to me. They who endured exile and danger and every form of hardship to found the great kindred Commonwealth beyond the sea—and what that exile must have been they only can feel who know how beautiful and how justly dear was the land they left—took with them, not only such seeds as would bear good fruit for the body, but those also of many a familiar flower that could serve only as food for sentiment and affection. Yet the most precious germs of all were those of memory and tradition, that had the gift of fernseed to go with them invisibly. They could not forget the land of their birth, nor can we, their descendants, forget the land of their ancestry. They fondly gave the old names to the new hamlets they were planting in the wilderness. The central county of my native State is the namesake of yours. It calls itself proudly the heart of the Commonwealth, and its beautiful chief city is Worcester. You knew how to touch a cord of tenderest association when, four years ago, you claimed me as of Worcestershire because my forefathers (the Lowells) had been so. You have been pleased, sir, to say that I have done something to strengthen the good feeling between the two great households of the English family. I am glad to think that I in any way deserve this praise, for I look upon that good feeling as of vital interest to the best hopes and aspirations of mankind. I am sure that you will find my excellent successor animated by the same sentiment, and as happy as I have always been, while warmly loyal to the country that is and should be the dearest of all, to recognize those ties of blood, of language, and of

kindred institutions which make England the next dearest. As for me, sir, the precious gift you have brought me, truly illuminated by its charming picture of buildings, some of them dear for their beauty, some because they recall your kindness or that of friends who have made me feel as if, when I went to Worcester, I was going home, is another witness of that universal kindness (may I not say affection?) by which the land of my fathers has gone near to make me fancy that I was a son rather than a far-off cousin. As such it will always be justly dear to me and mine. Wishing continued prosperity to the city of Worcester, I remain, etc.,

[Signed]

J. R. LOWELL.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES.

ON the Sunday afternoon before Lowell sailed for America, a little group of people might have been seen at Euston Station engaged in saying good-by to a friend.

“The American Minister, the two secretaries of the American Legation, Mr. Hoppin and Mr. Henry White, Mr. Alma-Tadema, and a few others composed the little group. The friend who was going away was Mr. Lowell. No announcement of his departure had been made; hardly anybody knew of it except the few who were there—the very reporters had failed to find it out. Mr. Lowell’s tastes do not lead him to seek publicity, and nothing could have suited him better than this quiet leave-taking. There was nothing to attract attention, and yet the scene was impressive to those who witnessed it. There went the man who for five years has been the foremost American in Europe; the most popular of American Ministers to England; the man who has done

more than any other during this period to make his country honored and liked abroad. It is characteristic of the English and of Mr. Lowell that his farewell should have been what it was. Neither he nor they like a fuss. The feeling on both sides is as deep as it could have been if the well-meant proposals for a public farewell had been pressed. Mr. Lowell goes to Chester to spend two days with Mr. and Mrs. Tom Hughes, who are among his oldest friends in England. The papers say he stays at Eaton Hall with the Duke of Westminster. The foundation for that story is that the Duke asked him and that Mr. Lowell declined, having long been engaged to Mr. Hughes. People in England seem to take it for granted that Mr. Lowell will presently return. The question they ask is not whether he will come back, but when. His last weeks have been spent in making things pleasant for Mr. Phelps ; efforts in which, as I have said before, the English show themselves ready to join with cordiality."

A foggy night amid icebergs delayed the Cunarder, *Scythia*, so that a pleasant reception which a few friends had prepared to give Lowell in Boston did not take place.

"In coming up the harbor Mr. Lowell talked freely about the crisis in British politics, which

had developed so rapidly since he sailed. 'When I left,' said he, 'things were in a very unsettled condition. I suppose Lord Salisbury is forming a new Cabinet. He is a very able leader and will undoubtedly make a successful ministry, but there is yet much trouble ahead for him. The redistribution bill is to be passed, and then there will be a new election. It will be a critical period for him and it is possible that the Liberals may yet secure control of the government. I foresaw the defeat of the Gladstone Ministry some time ago, but the Conservatives will find that they must largely pattern after his policy and give the Irish more than justice demands. He conceded all that was possible. Why, Irish farmers have vastly more advantages than have Scottish or English farmers. They are beginning to see this. This Irish question will be settled peaceably. They are human, as well as the English. About one fourth of them are thoroughly loyal to the government, and a much larger proportion would like to be, but they are overawed by some of their leaders. These Irish leaders are a peculiar people. They talk for the sake of talking, and do not pay much attention to what they are saying, nor do they stop to consider the effect of their language. I believe Mr. Parnell is thoroughly in

earnest and sincere in his efforts in behalf of his countrymen, but many of them are not so earnest. Wealthy Irishmen do not seem to have a very warm attachment for their country. They seem to prefer living in London or Paris.

“I do not see how any other policy can ever be adopted toward Ireland. She can never be separated from England. The natural location of the two countries forbids it. The country that frees Ireland must first conquer England, and then Ireland would be just as poorly off as her people say she now is. The countries are too close to admit of two different governments. There was much talk about annexing Ireland to the United States, but the absurdity of that idea is plain on its face. Why, all the so-called navy of the United States could not protect her property. I say “so-called,” for in reality our country has no navy; but I don’t know but that we are just as well off as though we had an extensive fleet of gunboats. An English naval officer told me only a short time ago that our policy with regard to a navy was, on the whole, the best. “Do not create a navy,” said he, “until you need it, and then build your vessels with all the latest modern improvements.” I do not know but that he is right. Of course it would take a little time and would cause an enormous outlay of

money. I don't think, however, that we shall be called upon to use a navy against England right away. The relations between the two countries could not be more pleasant or friendly, yet war is not an impossibility. We have English blood in our veins, and we have just as much English pride as those across the water. Neither country would consent to be bulldozed, but that is not likely to occur. The policy that has been maintained between the two countries is, I think, the wisest that could be pursued, and I am confident that my successor will do just right. Mr. Phelps is a man of great ability. Personally he is one of the pleasantest gentlemen I ever met. I am sure that the interests of our country will not suffer in his hands.'

"Mr. Lowell thought that Lord Salisbury would also 'carry out Mr. Gladstone's policy concerning the Anglo-Russian dispute. He is of the war party, but now that the responsibility rests upon his shoulders he will be very careful how he involves the whole continent of Europe in a war, for that is what a declaration of war between England and Russia would mean. I have never thought from the first that there would be war. I see that much was said about its probable effect upon trade in our country, but it would not have been so advantageous as has been supposed."

“The change in the Ministry would have wrought no change in the relations of Mr. Lowell to the English Government. ‘I could not have been more pleasantly situated,’ said he. ‘Had it not been for the change in my family relations I should probably have staid in England. There is nothing but English blood in my veins, and I have often remarked that I was just as much an Englishman as they were.’

“Soon after the boat was made fast to the pier, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Burnett, Mr. Lowell’s son-in-law and daughter, greeted him, and then the party took a carriage for Mr. Lowell’s sister’s residence in Boston.”

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE WELCOME HOME.

THE "Literary World" of Boston devoted its issue of June 27, 1885, to "A Welcome to Lowell," and the following poems and letters are some of the contributions to its columns. John G. Whittier sent a characteristic poem full of loving welcome : —

"Take our hands, dear Russell Lowell;  
Our hearts are all thy own,  
To-day we bid thee welcome  
Not for ourselves alone.

"In the long years of thy absence  
Some of us have grown old,  
And some have passed the portals  
Of the Mystery untold;

"For the hands that cannot clasp thee,  
For the voices that are dumb,  
For each and all I bid thee  
A grateful welcome home!

“For Cedarcroft’s sweet singer  
To the nine-fold Muses dear;  
For the Seer the winding Concord  
Paused by his door to hear;

“For him who, to the music  
Of the hemlock and the pine  
Set the old and tender story  
Of the lorn Evangeline;

“And for him the three-hilled city  
Shall hold in memory long,  
Whose name is the hint and token  
Of the pleasant Fields of Song!

“For the old friends unforgotten,  
For the young thou hast not known,  
I speak their heart-warm greeting:  
Come back and take thy own!

“From England’s royal farewells,  
And honors fitly paid,  
Come back, dear Russell Lowell,  
To Elmwood’s waiting shade!

“Come home with all the garlands  
That crown of right thy head.  
I speak for comrades living,  
I speak for comrades dead!”

From Newport, R. I., George Bancroft sent the following:—



“From my heart I join in giving a welcome to James Russell Lowell on his return home. In his long absence he has established himself in the esteem of the two great nations to which he has been successively accredited, and has retained the confidence and affection of his own countrymen. During his residence in Great Britain, he has had the opportunity of observing its government manifest the seemingly fixed policy, for these and for coming years, of establishing peace and friendship with us on the principle of reciprocal justice and equality ; as he plants his foot on his native soil, he will discern an ever-increasing moderation in the American mind, manifested by the desire to develop the resources of our empire rather than to enlarge its bounds.

“Men like Lowell the country can spare but a season for a foreign field of labor ; here, in our own great land, higher and nobler duties affecting the character of the nation crowd upon them with the surest promises of gladdening returns. If the great republic is bound, as Emerson taught, to exhibit in its life the beautiful as well as the true and the just, our ablest critic must strengthen the artist in resisting the tendency to substitute costly and often useless and trivial details for the grandeur of simplicity. He must applaud the people

as it claps its hands for joy at the rapid triumphs of science and the swift application of them to the business of life ; but it is more especially his high office to give help to the republic in receiving as its own citizens the great philosophers and poets of all time, from the days of Isaiah and Homer to our own.

“Our friend brings back with him his own nobleness of nature and activity of mind. Let us wish for him health and a late return to the skies, with intervening years of happiness and honor.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes furnished the following characteristic tribute :—

TO J. R. L. HOMEWARD BOUND.

“ [Brave Bird o’ freedom] what a sight it were  
To see thee in our waters yet appear  
[After] those flights upon the banks of Thames  
That so did take [all England with] our James.”

*Ben Johnson in memory of Shakespeare,*

*Adapted by O. W. H.*

From the Craigie House, Cambridge, wrote Samuel Longfellow :—

“I should be sorry indeed if, among the voices of greeting with which the *Literary World* salutes Mr. Lowell’s return, there should be no word from that Craigie House where for so many years he

was a frequent, welcome, and delightful guest ; even though the tongue that should have given that welcome, as it gave the farewell, is silent now.

“The cordial relation between the poets of Craigie House and Elmwood is known to all readers. Thirty-seven years ago, when Mr. Lowell wrote that piece of keen and frolic criticism, the ‘Fable for Critics,’ his steel became a swan’s quill while he spoke of the author of ‘Evangeline ;’ to whom, indeed, he had read some of the other passages of this poem in the manuscript.”

In 1867, on Mr. Longfellow’s sixtieth birthday, it was Mr. Lowell’s initials that were signed to the salutation that appeared in the morning “Advertiser” of February 27 : —

TO H. W. L.

“I need not praise the sweetness of his song  
Where limpid verse to limpid verse succeeds  
Smooth as our Charles, when fearing lest he wrong  
The new moon’s mirrored skiff, he slides along  
Full without noise, and whispers in his reeds.

“With loving breath of all the winds his name  
Is blown about the world, but to his friends  
A sweeter secret hides behind his fame  
And Love steals shyly through the loud acclaim  
To murmur a *God bless you !* and there ends.”

. . . . .  
And it was the hand of Mr. Lowell, as minister to Spain, that transmitted to his friend the announcement and the diploma, of his election as member of the Spanish Academy.

“And so it was, when the soft moonlight that had illuminated the halls of Elmwood passed into sorrowful eclipse, at the same time that a new light was kindled in the other home, that Mr. Longfellow wrote ‘The Two Angels.’ Later on, leaning upon the Elmwood gate, he bade the herons wing his messages of friendship. And when, in still later years, he had finished his translation of the *Divina Comedia*, and called in a few Dante-lovers on Wednesday evenings that he might read to them the proof-sheets for final criticism and suggestion, Mr. Lowell was one of the first three of that little club, and must often have been the life of the modest supper which closed those evenings.

“Of things more intimate nothing need be said here. I have spoken only of that friendship for so many years unclouded and unbroken, in which each so heartily rejoiced in the work and the fame of the other, and which will always hover around threshold and study in Craigie House and Elmwood.”

Rose Terry Cooke became the amanuensis of Hosea in the following witty lines : —

“HOSEA BIGELOW’S WELCOME TO J. R. L.”

“He’s comin’ back from ’crost the sea,  
The feller ’t writ such yarns ’bout me,  
I swan ! I’m pleased : for he’s the beater  
For rhymin’ on’t, of every cretur.  
Leastways of all the ones I know :  
Them kind on every bush don’t grow.  
Land ! how them fat old British fellers,  
That think they blow creation’s bellers,  
Must be’n put out, when sech as he  
Lit down amongst ’em, an’ they see,  
He knowed sech lots, an’ was so spry,  
They couldn’t beat him, ef they’d try !  
It done me good, I tell ye thet ;  
To see him brush his hat, an’ set  
Amongst them lords, an’ dukes, an’ t’ others  
Jest tho’ as they was men an’ brothers  
So cherk, and cute, an’ full o’ thunder  
It made them lords an’ ladies wonder,  
For hain’t they always thought a Yankee  
Wa’n’t skercely worth a sayin’ ‘ thankee ? ’  
Hooray ! I say : my hat’s a swingin’.  
Here comes the man to run our singin’ !  
He’s one that shows what Boston means  
A raisin’ folks on rye an’ beans.  
I tell ye, brains is worth the growin’.  
It’s them that makes the biggest showin’.  
An’ when our folks gets up an’ hollers,

'Tain't always 'bout almighty dollars.  
We go for sense, an' pluck, an' grit,  
Set off an' clamped with mother-wit;  
We stan' by him that stan's by us,  
That ain't no limp slab-sided cuss,  
But such a man as heaven created,  
An' airth tried hard before she mated.  
So give him welcome as we'd oughter;  
He done us proud acrost the water.  
But let's put in one sly old lick,  
About his varsifyin' trick.  
Say! now you've done with courts an' courtiers,  
An' gi'n the go-by to reporters,  
Do, for the land's sake! take that pen  
That comes so handy, and agen  
Huddup that flyin' hoss you bridled,  
When for the rest he r'ared an' sidled.  
Blow your old trumpet like a trooper,  
An' take them gals up on the crouper.  
The Nine that rode your pillion, arter  
I come from playin' a spell at slarter.  
We're tired of putterin' nonsense rhymin',  
We want to hear the great bell chimin'.  
You're welcome hum, old friend; you know it.  
You're welcomer our biggest poet!  
An' I dono whose heart beats loudest  
Amongst our lovin'est an' proudest.  
But in the hull, I'll bet you'll see  
There ain't none truer than

HOOSE.

E. C. Stedman wrote from New York:—

“Our most ideal poet and man of letters is so

eminent that others of his guild, in hastening to honor him, seem to be gaining honor for themselves. Besides, Mr. Lowell's own convictions always have been worth far more to him than the *aura popularis*.

“For once, however, he must consent, with respect to the welcome and plaudits that greet him here—in which our letters show how heartily American writers take part—to enjoy it all in the spirit of his own caucus orator. Of all speakers, poets, diplomats, he surely has the best right at this moment to declare frankly:—

“ ‘I thank ye, my frien's, for the warmth o' your greetin':  
Ther' 's few airthly blessin's but wut's vain an' fleetin';  
Ef ther' 's one thet (this time) hain't no cracks an' flaws,  
An' is worth goin' in for, it's pop'lar applause.’ ”

J. T. Trowbridge sent the following tribute:—

“Americans may well be proud to welcome home their countryman, whose force of talent, wit, and culture have not only stood the test of contact with what is best and brightest in Old World character and manners, but have shone with added lustre in their presence.”

Ex-President Hayes wrote as follows from his Ohio home:—

“Lowell has conferred such honor upon his country that all Americans will gladly unite in the ‘Well Done’ that greets him from every quarter, on his return to his home.”

Will Carleton takes Hosea by the hand in the following happy lines : —

“ With love not even he could wake,  
Save in his fatherland,  
We reach a Yankee grasp, and take  
Hosea by the hand !  
With smiles of praise that need must throng  
With sympathizing tears,  
We greet our prince of prose and song,  
In his maturer years ;  
For words that made a shining track  
Beyond the Atlantic foam,  
We lift our hearts, and welcome back  
Our statesman to his home ! ”

“The only drawback,” wrote Charles Dudley Warner, “to our enthusiastic welcome of Mr. Lowell home is that we cannot have him in England. But I think that our love will easily get the better of our national vanity. It used to be said of some of the New England folk, whom Mr. Lowell has described better than anybody else, that they only ate such farm produce as they could not sell. I hope we are past that stage of our de-



velopment, and that we are able to keep as well as appreciate the best product of our civilization.

“I will not go so far as to say that we need Mr. Lowell now as much as the English need him, but we have spared him long enough, and the English must get along as well as they can. His stay abroad has been sufficient in time to show Europe what the real American is at his best, and we should now have a chance to show him that a democratic republic, of which he has been an unflinching representative, is not ungrateful to him.

“While the country at large rises up to welcome his return, and to honor the patriot and scholar who has done as much as any man in his generation to give us cosmopolitan dignity among nations, it is peculiarly the business of the world of letters to hail him and crown him. We shall have to go back to the ambassadors of the Grecian States for any parallel to his career as the representative of the nobility and importance of literature in the affairs of life. His influence has not only made two allied people feel more strongly their kinship, but he has lifted Letters, in the presence of the world, into its proper place. And I am sure that his service in this respect will endure in memory longer than the temporary honor of his merely official life.

“As one of the million writers I thank you for the privilege of extending to Mr. Lowell a most hearty welcome.”

L. V. Cole of South Williamstown, Mass, sent  
“The Mother’s Welcome” : —

“New England, the mother, grew silent one day  
And sat in a thoughtful mood ;  
‘I wonder,’ at last she seemed to say  
With a sigh that I understood,

‘I wonder what has become of the voice  
I used so often to hear,  
Clear-toned and, in its utterance, choice ;  
I miss it this many a year.

‘It wandered among the trees I bear,  
This beautiful voice and true,  
Here Under the Willows, or Old Elm there,  
In Birch-tree and Pine-tree too !

‘And in loftier air, with wings more strong,  
It soared I remember how !  
But why is the silence so deep and long ?  
Has my child forgotten me now ?’

‘Dear mother,’ I cried, for the news that day  
Had flashed from the sea to the town,  
‘You would better put wonder and trouble away,  
And get out your holiday gown !

‘Somebody is coming whom you would greet,  
And who wears fresh laurels from men ;  
His heart, it is said, outruns his feet —  
May he sing for your glory again !’

The fond old mother, with joy in her tone  
And a bounding heart in her breast,  
Has welcomed the singer back to his throne  
In the land he still loves best.”

From three of our American colleges came the following greetings : —

OUR POET-AMBASSADOR.

If my voice of welcome can add anything to the general acclaim that will greet the return of our poet-ambassador, Mr. Lowell, I gladly send it. I know of no instance, ancient or modern, of an equal combination of poetical power and eminence with the successful administration of high national and political trusts. He has delighted and honored us, and we honor ourselves in honoring him.

MARK HOPKINS.

*Williams College, June 15, 1885.*

THE SCHOLAR IN POLITICS.

I heartily join in the welcome which Mr. Lowell will receive on his return. His splendid diplomatic services are another illustration of the value of scholarship and literary culture in statesmanship.

JULIUS H. SEELYE.

*Amherst, Mass, June 17, 1885.*

TO THE HON. JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, D. C. L.

Most cordially do I add my words of greeting and welcome to the many which you will hear from so many admirers and friends. As a poet and critic, a gentleman and diplomat, you have honored your country and yourself, and earned the warmest thanks of your fellow-citizens. It is especially gratifying to those who belong to the Commonwealth of Letters, that by your successful administration you have so eminently exemplified the truth that a man of letters is not necessarily ignorant of affairs, nor unskilled in diplomacy. Ungenerous yet discriminating criticisms which from time to time you have had occasion to utter have demonstrated to our English cousins that while we read the best of their writers with the warmest enthusiasm, our admiration is tempered by discriminating insight. Many of the wise and friendly words which you have spoken on English soil will long be remembered in the many American homes to which you will always be welcome, more than ever, as you return after an absence of so many years — an absence brightened with cheerful sunshine, though shaded with sacred sorrow.

NOAH PORTER.

*New Haven, Conn., June 17 1885.*

William Everett sent the following "Sonnet":—

"Lowell, of worthy sires the worthy son,  
At length restored from Albion and from Spain,  
And bringing every charm of life again,  
Except that dearest, to her giver gone —  
How should love hail thee? in what richer tone  
Renew the music of her slumbering strain,  
Hushed, while thy clarion sounded o'er the main  
Peal after peal, for each new glory won?  
Be thanked for all! But chief, that while on high

Thy country's starry banner thou didst bear  
Till Briton and Iberian bowed the knee,  
Thy golden words taught their enlightened eye  
Themselves to read in sparkling mirror there,  
And their own honors better know, through thee."

Oliver Johnson, "a survivor of the great struggle," wrote:—

"As one of the few survivors of the great anti-slavery struggle, to which James Russell Lowell gave the earliest fruits of his genius, and in grateful memory of the help he gave when help was most needed, I gladly lend my feeble voice to bid him welcome now upon his return from the mother country, where his distinguished services as the representative of the American republic have reflected the highest honor upon his countrymen and himself."

Lucy Larcom "hopes he has come back to sing":—

"Are we not all glad indeed of Mr. Lowell's return to his own country and ours? We have missed him every year when the cat-birds and bobolinks renewed their May-time music, when buttercups and dandelions spread their cloth of gold upon the lawns, and when birch-leaves began to ripple in breeze and sunshine.

"We cannot do without one who is so essentially

and pervasively our poet of poets, and we do hope he has come back *to sing*."

Wrote Bradford Torrey : —

"If I am to have any part in the proposed welcome to Mr. Lowell, it must be as standing for the great body of his readers and friends, who remain to him unknown. We know *him*, at all events, and are glad to have him back again with us, proud as we have been of his representation of us abroad. May he live long, to write poems, critical essays, narratives of travel, and whatever else his genius may direct — only (may I say it?) let him not too often fall into the vein of *My Garden Acquaintance*, lest some of the rest of us find our occupation gone."

"A hearty welcome home" is sent in the following letter : —

Thanks for the privilege you accord me of joining to give voice to the hearty welcome home with which the whole country greets Mr. Lowell, all the more hearty because we feared that the unequal social attractions of our great Mother-land, who has taken him so affectionately to her bosom, would prevail over the ties — ah, how many of them have broken — which bind him to us. With what a ringing word of welcome would he have been greeted by Emerson, who felt we could not spare him, and mourned to me over his long absence from his native land.

W. H. FURNESS.

*Wallingford, Delaware Co., Pa., June 18, 1885.*

And from the South came two characteristic greetings : —

TO JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

When home returned the Roman conqueror,  
 It was with trumpet's blare and loud acclaim,  
 On his haught brow the bloody laurel of Fame,  
 With spoils of realms, and kings subdued in war.  
 Not in such guise we welcome you once more,  
 Who come from peaceful victory, void of blame,  
 Whom license dare not taunt with words of shame —  
 The Statesman, Scholar, Poet, Orator.  
 We honor you as one who never swerves  
 From the just rule of what is right and true —  
 At home — abroad — in whatso station placed —  
 And one who well his country ever serves,  
 But best in song. Though fourfold wreaths be due,  
 Yet with the ivy are you fitliest graced.

W. L. SHOEMAKER.

*Georgetown, D. C., June 15, 1885.*

A VOICE FROM VIRGINIA.

I am glad to join the welcome and friendly greeting you purpose offering to Mr. Lowell on his return.

His eminence in letters and the distinction which he has acquired as our representative abroad certainly entitle him to this mark of respect and regard; and I cordially add my small word to the many congratulations he will receive from his countrymen.

J. ESTEN COOKE.

*The Briars, Boyce, Va., June, 15, 1885.*

There were numerous other contributions to this

hearty "Welcome to Lowell," and all from well-known names in literature. From some of them we have quoted elsewhere in the book, as, for instance, in Dr. Bartol's tribute, a part of which is printed in the opening chapter.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### VARIOUS ADDRESSES.

NOT long after his return home, Lowell was invited to address the annual literary gathering at Sanderson Academy, Ashfield, Mass. His life-long friend, Charles Eliot Norton, presided at the festival and introduced the speaker in his own eloquent and polished manner, closing with these words: "On our futile laurels he looks down, himself our highest crown."

Lowell was received with long and hearty applause, and spoke as follows:—

"I cannot easily escape from some strength of emotion in listening to the words of my friend who has just sat down, unless I receive it on the shield which has generally been my protection against many of the sorrows and some of the hardships of life. I mean the shield of humor, and I shall, therefore, take less seriously than playfully the portrait that he has been kind enough to draw of me. It reminds me of a story I once heard of a young poet who published his volume of verses,

and prefixed to it his own portrait, drawn by a friendly artist. The endeavor of his life from that time forward was to look like the portrait that his friend had drawn. I shall make the same endeavor. It is a great pleasure to me to come here to-day, not only because I have met some of the oldest friends of my life, but also that after having looked in the eyes of so many old English audiences I see face to face a new English one, and when I looked at them I was reminded of a family likeness and of that kinship of blood which unites us. When I look at you I see many faces that remind me of faces I saw on the other side of the water, and I feel that whether I speak there or here I am essentially speaking to one people. I have been struck, since I came back, with some remarks. I am not going to talk about myself, and I am not going to make a speech. I have spoken so often for you on the other side of the water, that I feel as though I had a certain claim, at least, to be put on the retired list. But I could not fail to observe a certain distrust of America that has peeped out in remarks made, sometimes in the newspapers, sometimes to myself, as to whether a man could live eight years out of America without really preferring Europe. It seems to me to imply what I should call a very unworthy distrust in the powers

of America to inspire affection. I feel to-day in looking in your faces somewhat as I did when I took my first walk over the hills after my return, and the tears came into my eyes as I was welcomed by the familiar wayside flowers, the trees, the birds that had been my earliest friends. It seems to me that those who take such a view quite miscalculate the force of the affection that a man feels for his country. It is something deeper than a sentiment. If there were anything deeper, I should say it was something deeper than an instinct. It is that feeling of self-renunciation and of identification with another, which Ruth expressed when she said, 'Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to depart from following after thee, for whither thou goest I will go ; where thou livest I will live, and where thou diest there will I die also.' That, it seems to me, is the instinctive feeling that a man has.

"At the same time, this does not exclude the having clear eyes to see the faults of one's country. I think that, as an old president of Harvard College once said to a person who was remonstrating with him for speaking hardly of one of whom he had a very ill opinion, 'But charity, doctor, charity.' 'Yes, I know ; but charity has eyes and ears, and won't be made a fool of.' I notice a

good many changes in coming home, a few of which I may, perhaps, be allowed to touch upon. I notice a great growth in luxury, inevitable, I suppose, and which may have good in it — more good, perhaps, then I can see. I notice also one change that has impressed me profoundly, and when I hear that New England is drawing away, I cannot help thinking to myself how much more prosperous the farms look than they did when I was young; how much more neat is the farming; how much greater the attention to what will please the eye about the farm, as the planting of flowers and trimming the grass, which seems to me a very good sign. I had an opportunity, by a strange accident, of becoming very intimate with the outward appearance of New England during my youth by going about when a little boy with my father when he went on exchanges. He always went in his own vehicle, and he sometimes drove as far west as Northampton. I do not wish to detain you on this point, except as it interested me and is now first in my mind. While I was in England I had occasion once to address them on the subject of Democracy, and I could not help thinking when I came up here that I was coming to one of its original sources, for certain it is, that in the village community of New England, in its

‘plain living and high thinking,’ began that social equality which afterwards developed on the political side into what we call democracy. And democracy — while surely we cannot claim for it that it is perfect — yet democracy, it seems to me, is the best expedient hitherto invented by mankind, not for annihilating distinctions and inequalities, for that is impossible, but so far as it is humanly possible, for compensating them. Here in our little towns early in the last century, people met without thinking of it on a high tableland of common manhood. There was no sense of presumption from below, there was no possibility of condescension from above, because there was no above or below in the community. Learning was always respected in the clergyman, in the doctor, in the squire, the justice of the peace and the rest of the community. This made no artificial distinction. I observe also that our people are getting over their very bad habit with regard to politics, for democracy, you must remember, lays a heavier burden on the individual conscience than any other form of government ; and I have been glad to observe that we have been getting over that habit of thinking that our institutions will go of themselves. Now it seems to me that there is no machine of human construction, or into which

the wit of man has entered that can go of itself without supervision, without oiling; that there are no wheels that will revolve without our help except the great wheel of the constellations or that great circle of the sun's, which has its hand upon the dial plate, and which was made by a hand much less fallible than ours. It also pleases me very much to see a friend, whose constancy, whose faith and whose courage have done so much more than any other man's to bring about that reform, though when I speak of civil-service reform, the friend who stands at our elbow on all these occasions will suggest to me a certain parallel, that is, that as Mr. Curtis is here to-day, and I am here to-day, it reminds one of the temperance lecturer who used to go about carrying with him an unhappy person as the awful example, and it may have flickered before some of your minds that I was the 'awful example' of the very reform I had preached. However, I say that it is to me a very refreshing thing to find that this old happy-go-lucky feeling about our institutions has a very good chance of passing away.

“One thing which always impressed me on the other side of the water as an admirable one, and as one which gave them a certain advantage over us, is the number of men who train themselves

specifically for politics, for government. We are apt to forget, over here, that the art of governing men, as it is the highest, so it is the most difficult, of all arts. We are particular how our boots are made, but about our constitutions we 'trust in the Lord,' without even, as Cromwell advised, keeping our powder dry. We commit the highest destinies of this republic, which some of us hope bears the hope of the world in her womb—to whom? Certainly not always to those who are most fit on any principle of natural selection; certainly sometimes to those who are most unfit on any principle of selection,—and this is a very serious matter, for, if you will allow me to speak with absolute plainness, no country that allows itself to be governed for a moment by its blackguards is safe. That was written before the United States of America existed. It is one of the truths of human nature and of destiny. If I were a man who had any political aspiration—which, thank heaven, I have not—if I had any official aspiration—which, thank heaven, also, I have not—I should come home here, and when I first met an American audience I should say to them, 'My friends, America can learn nothing of Europe; Europe must come to school here. You have the tallest monument, you have the biggest

waterfall, you have the highest tariff of any country in the world.' I would tell you that the last census showed that you had gained so many millions, as if the rabbits did not beat us in that way of multiplication, as if it counted for anything! It seems to me that what we make of our several millions is the vital question for us.

"I was very much interested in what Professor Stanley Hall said. I am heretic enough to have doubted whether our common schools are the panacea we have been inclined to think them. I was exceedingly interested in what he said about the education which a boy gained on the hills here. It seems to me we are going to fall back into the easy belief that because our common schools teach more than they used — and in my opinion much more than they ought — we can dispense with the training of the household. When Mr. Harrison was telling us of the men who were obliged to labor without hope from one end of the day to the other and one end of the year to the other, he added what is quite true — that perhaps, after all, they are happier than that very large class of men who have leisure without culture, and whose sole occupation is either the killing of game or the killing of time — that is, the killing of the most valuable possession that we have."



At the Class Day dinner at Harvard College, Oliver Wendell Holmes read a complimentary poem to James Russell Lowell, one verse of which runs as follows : —

“ But what deep magic, what alluring arts  
Our Truthful *James* led captive British hearts ;  
Whether his shrewdness made their Statesmen halt,  
Or if his bearing found their dons at fault,  
Or if his virtue was a strange surprise  
Like honest Yankees we can simply guess ;  
England herself will be the first to claim  
Her only conqueror since the Normans came.”

To this the “ London Punch ” amicably replies : —

“ Not halting Statesmen and not dons outdone,  
Taught us to love this lord of sense and fun ;  
Nor did it come to us as a surprise  
To find a Yankee virtuous as wise.  
No, HOLMES, Sweet HOLMES ! Our pride it nothing shames  
To own us conquered by your Truthful James.  
His ‘ sword and spear ’ in truth were cause of it,  
The sword of eloquence, the spear of wit !  
For heart, not art, sage head, not iron hand  
Made him the ‘ conqueror ’ of our stubborn land.  
Captured us ? Yes ! and he’ll be hailed with rapture  
If he’ll come back among us to recapture !  
Could you come too, *tant mieux* ! for what more pat  
Than to pair ‘ Conqueror ’ with ‘ Autocrat ’ ?  
*Verb: sap* : dear OLIVER ! It won’t be lost on  
One of the best and brightest brains in Boston ! ”

At the "Concord Celebration" Lowell made the following happy remarks : —

"Had the early settlers possessed all the foresight with which Governor Robinson credited them, they could not have foreseen his making a speech here this day. His old friend, Judge Hoar, had assured him that if he came nothing was expected of him ; and on that assurance he had come to Concord. Now Judge Hoar informed him that he had not been expected to deliver a poem. In rising to address a Concord audience his memory travelled back nearly fifty years. Not an adopted son of Concord, he was in his youth 'bound out' for a time to Concord, and was most kindly used. In other words, while in his senior year at Harvard he was rusticated at Concord. To that rustication he felt that he owed much, for there he first became acquainted with Emerson. A flighty and exceedingly youthful boy, he was yet readily impressed by Emerson, whom he recalled much as Dante recalled his teacher, Brunetto Latini, 'that dear and good paternal spirit,' who taught how man makes himself eternal.

"Adverting to Concord's historic past, Mr. Lowell said that the men of Concord made war with a far-reaching result, if not purpose, and from the hour when they marched to the North Bridge had flowed

the greatest results. Yet it might be doubted whether they fully appreciated their action. The leader who that day said, 'We will march across our own bridge,' made as good a declaration of independence as could be drawn up; and yet he did not declare all. For not only did those minute men march across their own bridge, but democracy in its most beautiful form marched over the bridge and entered into the field of cosmopolitan politics. That day was what the nation owed to Concord politically. Turning to the country's, the world's literary debt to Concord, we find in the contemporaneous residences of Emerson, Hawthorne and Thoreau a most remarkable fact. As Concord fired the shot heard round the world, to which we owe our political independence, so we owe to Emerson, more than any other, our intellectual independence. With him we first ceased to be provincial. Hawthorne taught us the great and needed lesson that in our own past there is an ample storehouse for works of imagination and fancy. Thoreau's teaching was that Nature is as friendly and inspiring here as in Wordsworth's country or anywhere else. If we have stars enough -- which he sometimes doubted -- to make a whole constellation of Orion, then in these three men of Concord, we have those three eminent stars which

make the belt of Orion. In rising to-day he could not help recalling one of his youthful recollections of Concord. His good tutor was an admirer of John Locke, but sometimes took issue with him. At such times the speaker felt it a duty to take Locke's side. One day the tutor said, 'Locke is certainly wrong when he says the human mind is never without an idea, for my mind is often without an idea.' He must confess that he sympathized with his old tutor when he [Lowell] was first called upon to speak. But, if he had given his hearers no new ideas, he must give them the assurance that he felt it good to come back here and retemper one's self in this pure spring of American democracy, although in his case the tonic was not needed. He heartily delighted in such occasions as the present as keeping alive the thread of historic continuity so important to men, to families, to towns and to nations, in the development of character."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ANECDOTES AND HARVARD ADDRESS.

A PERSONAL friend who visited Lowell at his daughter's home in Southborough, Mass., thus describes the delightful surroundings:

“There are children and cattle and dogs, and long, undisturbed walks over the hills; and the house itself, built by his son-in-law, Mr. Edward Burnett, is inexpressibly satisfactory within and without. Everything is spacious, easy, airy. A veranda, broken here and there by porches, surrounds it. The house appears tall, many-gabled, informal; the upper stories are covered with scale-shaped shingles; paint is not used, but a brownish stain, which more resembles the work of nature than of art. Inside, the floors and walls are finished with polished hard wood and painted plaster. There is plenty of light and cheerfulness and no trace anywhere of dust or dinginess. It is in one of the topmost rooms of the house that Mr. Lowell has his study, facing the west. It does not contain many books, but most of them have substan-

tial bindings. There is a comfortable table or two, some easy chairs, and Portuguese cabinets containing photographs and papers. It is a very different place from the shadowy study at Elmwood, in Cambridge, with which one's idea of Mr. Lowell is chiefly associated ; and it is probably used more for work than for the leisure and luxury of the scholar. For Mr. Lowell has on hand more work than he can conveniently accomplish, and this fact may have something to do with his periodical escapes to England.

Mrs. Burnett, the "little Mabel" of that pathetic poem, "The First Snow-Fall"; bears a resemblance in looks to her distinguished father. Though very quiet, she is a woman of high spirit, and is said to ride to hounds exceedingly well. Indeed, she is noted as one of the best horsewomen in New England.

"In the course of a dinner at the country place of ex-Minister John Welsh, Mr. Lowell expressed a very high admiration for the Spanish, to whose court he once was minister. For valor, intellectual ability, honesty, and grace and dignity of person, he said, enthusiastically, the Spaniards rank with the best people on the top of the earth. Apropos of the honesty of the common people, he told this anecdote: When he left Madrid and went to Lon-

don, he brought with him a man-servant who had attended him some years.

“Afterward, the servant gave Mr. Lowell a sum of money, with a request that it be forwarded to his brother in Spain. Mr. Lowell took the money and offered a receipt, but the servant seemed to be pained by the proceeding, and to consider the tender of the paper a reproach.

“‘Why,’ said he, drawing himself up, ‘I am an honest man. I do not want the paper. I would not take advantage of the absence of the paper to cheat you, Señor.’

“‘But you do not understand,’ said the ex-minister. ‘This is simply a business affair. The paper will protect your interests.’

“‘No ; my interests are protected.’

“‘But your brother, then, he would like to see the money accounted for.’

“‘My brother is an honest man, too.’

“‘Well, then, I would like you to take the receipt for my own satisfaction.’

“‘You, Señor. Are not you also an honest man?’

“Lowell despaired of making the trustful and picturesque Spaniard understand, and forwarded the money as it stood. In a few weeks he received a letter from his servant’s brother, couched

in the hyperbole of Spanish politeness, thanking him for the gracious 'gift' of gold.

"Mr. Lowell, at the same dinner, said he had mapped out his future life. He will accept no governmental office of any kind, but will give himself up altogether to literature. He has a great liking for English life, and says he will spend a considerable part of every year in Great Britain ; but, in order that he may not expatriate himself, he will accept no position abroad."

To the library of Harvard College, Lowell has presented, since his return from Europe, a valuable collection of between six and seven hundred volumes. "The books are mostly Spanish, with a few English and Italian, and include many that are rare or choice. Besides a long list of valuable works relating to early Spanish and American history, there is a copy of the *Editio princeps* of Lopez's *Chronicle*, printed in 1644, and bought in for Mr. Lowell at the Sunderland sale in 1882, of which the Hon. George P. Marsh wrote : 'He that buys it at its weight in gold will make a cheap bargain.' "

On November 8, 1886 — which was the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of Harvard College — James Russell Lowell, after being introduced by Judge Devens to the vast



assembly, delivered a stirring oration, from which the following extracts are taken : —

“It seems an odd anomaly that, while respect for age and deference to its opinions have diminished, and are still sensibly diminishing among us, the relish of antiquity should be more pungent, and the value set upon things, merely because they are old, should be greater in America than anywhere else. It is merely a sentimental relish, for ours is a new country in more senses than one, and, like children, when they are fancying themselves this or that, we have to play very hard in order to believe that we are old. But we like the game none the worse, and multiply our anniversaries with honest zeal, as if we increased our centuries by the number of events we could congratulate ourselves on having happened a hundred years ago. There is something of instinct in this, and it is a wholesome instinct if it serve to quicken our consciousness of the forces that are gathered by duration and continuity ; if it teach us that, ride fast and far as we may, we carry the past on our crupper, as immovably seated there as the black care of the Roman poet. The generations of men are braided inextricably together, and the very trick of our gait may be countless generations older than we. . . .

“Are we to suppose that these memories were less dear and gracious to the Puritan scholars at whose instigation this college was founded, than to that old Puritan who sang in the dim religious light, the long-drawn aisles and fretted vaults, which these memories recalled? Doubtless all these things were present to their minds, but they were ready to forego them all for the sake of that truth, whereof, as Milton says of himself, they were members incorporate. The pitiful contrast which they must have felt between the carven sanctuaries of learning they had left behind and the wattled fold they were rearing here on the edge of the wilderness, is to me more than tenderly — it is almost sublimely — pathetic. When I think of their unpliable strength of purpose, their fidelity to their ideal, their faith in God and in themselves, I am inclined to say, with Donne, that —

“ ‘ We are scarce our fathers’ shadows cast at noon.’ ”

“Our past is well-nigh desolate of æsthetic stimulus. We have none, or next to none, of these aids to the imagination, of these coigns of vantage for the tendrils of memory or affection. Not one of our older buildings is venerable or will ever become so. Time refuses to console them. They all

look as though they meant business, and nothing more. And it is precisely because this college meant business — business of the greatest import — and did that business as thoroughly as it might with no means that were not niggardly, except an abundant purpose to do its best, it is precisely for this that we have gathered to-day. We come back hither from the experiences of a richer life as the son who has prospered returns to the household of his youth, to find in its very homeliness a pulse, if not of deeper, certainly of fonder emotion, than any splendor could stir. ‘Dear old mother,’ we say, ‘how charming you are in your plain cap and the drab silk that has been turned again since we saw you! You were constantly forced to remind us that you could not afford to give us this and that which some other boys had, but your discipline and diet were wholesome, and you sent us forth into the world with the sound constitutions and healthy appetites that are bred of simple fare.’

“It is good for us to commemorate this homespun past of ours; good, in these days of reckless and swaggering prosperity, to remind ourselves how poor our fathers were, and that we celebrate them because for themselves and their children they chose wisdom and understanding and the things that are of God rather than any other

riches. This is our Founders' Day, and we are come together to do honor to them all. First, to the Commonwealth, which laid our corner-stone; next, to the gentle and godly youth from whom we took our name — himself scarce more than a name — and with them to the countless throng of benefactors, rich and poor, who have built us up to what we are. We cannot do it better than in the familiar words, 'Let us now praise famous men and our fathers that begat us. The Lord hath wrought great glory by them through his great power from the beginning. Leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learning, meet for the people; wise and eloquent in their instructions. These be of them that have left a name behind them that their praises might be reported. And some there be which have no memorial, who are perished as though they had never been. But these were merciful men whose righteousness hath not been forgotten. With their seed shall continually remain a good inheritance. Their seed standeth fast and their children for their sakes.'

"This two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of our college is not remarkable as commemorating any venerable length of days. There is hardly a country in Europe that cannot show us universi-

ties that were older than ours now is when ours was but a grammar school with Eaton as master. Bologna, Paris, Oxford were already famous schools when Dante visited them six hundred years ago. We are ancient, it is true, on our own continent, ancient even as compared with several German universities more renowned than we. It is not, then, primarily the longevity of our alma mater upon which we are gathered here to congratulate her and each other. Kant says, somewhere, that as the record of human transactions accumulate, the memory of man will have room only for those of supreme cosmopolitical importance. Can we claim for the birthday we are keeping a significance of so wide a bearing, and so long a reach? If we may not do that, we may at least affirm, confidently, that the event it records and emphasizes is second in real import to none that has happened in this western hemisphere. The material growth of the colonies would have brought about their political separation from the mother country in the fullness of time, without that stain of blood which unhappily keeps its own memory green so long. But the founding of the first English college here was what saved New England from becoming a mere geographical expression. It did more, for it insured, and I believe was meant to

insure, our intellectual independence of the Old World. That independence has been long in coming, but it will come at last ; and are not the names of the chiefest of those who have hastened its coming written on the roll of Harvard College ?

“ I think this foundation of ours a quite unexampled thing. Surely never were the bases of such a structure as this has become and was meant to be laid by a community of men so poor, in circumstances so unprecedented, and under what seemed such sullen and averted stars. The colony was in danger of an Indian war, was in the throes of that Antinomian controversy which threatened its very existence, yet the leaders of opinion on both sides were united in the resolve that sound learning and an educated clergy should never cease from among them or their descendants in the Commonwealth they were building up. In the midst of such fears and such tumults, Harvard College was born ; and not Marina herself had a more blustering birth or a more chiding nativity. The prevision of those men must have been as clear as their faith was steadfast. Well they knew and had laid to heart the wise man’s precept, ‘ Take fast hold of instruction ; let her not go, for she is thy life.’

“ There can be little question that the action of

the General Court received its impulse and direction from the clergy, men of eminent qualities and of well-deserved authority. Among the Massachusetts Bay colonists the proportion of ministers trained at Oxford and Cambridge was surprisingly large, and if we may trust the evidence of contemporary secular literature, such men as Higginson, Cotton, Wilson, Norton, Shepard, Bulkley, Davenport, to mention no more, were, in learning, intelligence and general accomplishment, far above the average parson of the country and the Church from which their consciences had driven them out. The presence and influence of such men were of inestimable consequence to the fortunes of the colony. If they were narrow, it was as the sword of righteousness was narrow. If they had but one idea, it was as the leader of a forlorn hope had but one and can have no other — namely, to do the duty that is laid on him and ask no questions. Our Puritan ancestors have been misrepresented and maligned by persons without imagination enough to make themselves contemporary with, and therefore able to understand, the men whose memories they strive to blacken. That happy breed of men who, both in Church and State, led our first emigration, were children of the most splendid intellectual epoch that England has ever

known. They were the coevals of a generation which passed on, in scarcely a diminished radiance, the torch of life kindled in great Eliza's golden days. Out of the new learning, the new ferment, alike religious and national, and the new discoveries, with their suggestion of boundless possibility, the alembic of that age had distilled a potent elixir either inspiring or intoxicating, as the mind that imbibed it was strong or weak. Are we to suppose that the lips of the founders of New England alone were unwetted by a drop of that stimulating draught? That Milton was the only Puritan that had read Shakespeare and Ben Johnson and Beaumont and Fletcher? I do not believe it, whoever may. Communities as well as men have a right to be judged by their best. We are justified in taking the elder Winthrop as a type of the leading emigrants, and the more we know him, the more we learn to reverence his great qualities, whether of mind or character. The posterity of those earnest and single-minded men may have thrown the creed of their fathers into the waste basket, but their fidelity to it, and to the duties they believed it to involve, is the most precious and potent drop in their transmitted blood. It is especially noteworthy that they did not make a strait-waistcoat of this creed for their new college.



The more I meditate upon them, the more I am inclined to pardon the enthusiasm of our old historian when he said that God had sifted three kingdoms to plant New England.

“The Massachusetts Bay colony itself also was then and since without a parallel. It was established by a commercial company whose members combined in themselves the two by no means incongruous elements, enthusiasm and business sagacity, the earthy ingredient, as in dynamite, holding in check its explosive partner, which yet could and did explode on sufficient concussion. They meant that their venture should be gainful, but at the same time believed that nothing could be long profitable for the body wherein the soul found not also her advantage. They feared God, and kept their powder dry because they feared him, and meant that others should. I think their most remarkable characteristic was their public spirit, and in nothing did they show both that and the wise forecast that gives it its best value more clearly than when they resolved to keep the higher education of youth in their own hands, and under their own eye. This they provided for in the college. Eleven years later they established their system of public schools, where reading and writing should be taught. This they did partly, no doubt,

to provide feeders for the more advanced schools, and so for the college, but even more, it may safely be inferred, because they had found that the policy to which their ends, rough-hew them as they might, must be shaped by the conditions under which they were forced to act, could be safe only in the hands of intelligent men, or, at worst, of men to whom they had given a chance to become such.

“One is sometimes tempted to think that all learning is as repulsive to ingenuous youth as the multiplication table to Scott's little friend, Marjorie Fleming, though this is due in great part to mechanical methods of teaching. ‘I am now going to tell you,’ she writes, ‘the horrible and wretched plague that my multiplication table gives me; you can't conceive it; the most devilish thing is eight times eight and seven times seven; it is what Nature itself can't endure.’ I know that I am approaching treacherous ashes which cover burning coals, but I must on. Is not Greek, nay, even Latin, yet more unendurable than poor Marjorie's task? How many boys have not sympathized with Heine in hating the Romans because they invented Latin grammar? And they were quite right, for we begin the study of languages at the wrong end, at the end which Nature does not offer

us, and are thoroughly tired of them before we arrive at them, if you will pardon the bull. But is that any reason for not studying them in the right way? I am familiar with the arguments for making the study of Greek especially a matter of choice or chance. I admit their plausibility and the honesty of those who urge them. I should be willing, also, to admit that the study of the ancient languages without the hope or the prospect of going on to what they contain would be useful only as a form of intellectual gymnastics. Even so, they would be as serviceable as the higher mathematics to most of us. But I think that a wise teacher should adapt his tasks to the highest, and not the lowest, capacities of the taught.

“For those lower, also, they would not be wholly without profit. When there is a tedious sermon, says George Herbert,

“‘God takes a text, and teacheth patience,’

not the least pregnant of lessons. One of the arguments against the compulsory study of Greek, namely, that it is wiser to give our time to modern languages and modern history than to dead languages and ancient history, involves, I think, a verbal fallacy. Only those languages can properly be called dead in which nothing living has been

written. If the classic languages are dead, they yet speak to us, and with a clearer voice than that of any living tongue.

“ ‘Graus ingenium, Graus dedit ore rotundo  
Musa loqui præter laudem nullius avaris.’

“ If their language is dead, yet the literature it enshrines is rammed with life as, perhaps, no other writing, except Shakespeare’s, ever was or will be. It is as contemporary with to-day as with the ears it first enraptured, for it appeals, not to the man of then or now, but to the entire round of human nature itself. Men are ephemeral or evanescent, but whatever badge the authentic soul of man has touched with her immortalizing finger, no matter how long ago, is still young and fair as it was to the world’s gray father’s. Oblivion looks in the face of the Grecian muse only to forget her purpose. Even for the mastering of our own tongue there is no expedient so fruitful as translation out of another ; how much more when that other is a language at once so precise and so flexible as the Greek ! Greek literature is also the most fruitful comment on our own. Coleridge has told us with what profit he was made to study Shakespeare and Milton in conjunction with the Greek dramatists. It is no sentimental argument for this study that

the most justly balanced, the most serene and the most fecundating minds since the revival of learning have been saturated with Greek literature. We know not whither other studies will lead us, especially if dissociated from this; we do not know to what summits, far above our lower region of turmoil, this has led, and what the many-sided outlook thence. Will such studies make anachronisms of us? Unfit us for the duties and the business of to-day? I can recall no writer more truly modern than Montaigne, who was almost more at home in Athens and Rome than in Paris. Yet he was a thrifty manager of his estate, and a most competent mayor of Bordeaux. I remember passing once in London where demolition for a new thoroughfare was going on. Many houses left standing in the rear of those cleared away bore signs with the inscription "Ancient Lights." This was the protest of their owners against being built out by the new improvements from such glimpse of heaven as their fathers had, without adequate equivalent. I laid the moral to heart.

"I am speaking of the college as it has always existed and still exists. In so far as it may be driven to put on the forms of the university — I do not mean the four faculties merely, but in the modern sense — we shall naturally find ourselves

compelled to assume the method with the function. Some day we shall offer here a chance, at least, to acquire the *omne scibile*. I shall be glad, as shall we all, when the young American need no longer go abroad for any part of his training, though that may not be always a disadvantage, if Shakespeare was right in thinking that —

“ ‘Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits.’

I should be still gladder if Harvard should be the place that offered the alternative. It seems more than ever probable that this will happen, and happen in our day. And whenever this consummation is accomplished, it will be due, more than to any and all others, to the able, energetic and simple-minded man who has presided over the college during the trying period of transition, and who, by a rare combination of eminent qualities, will carry that transition to its fulfilment without haste and without jar. *Ohne Hast, ohne Rast*. He, more than any of his distinguished predecessors, has brought the university into closer and more telling relations with the national life in whatever that life has which is most distinctive, most excellent and most hopeful. But we still mainly occupy the position of a German gymnasium. Under existing circumstances, therefore, and with the methods

of teaching they enforce, I think that special and advanced courses should be pushed on, as the other professional courses are, into the post-graduate period. The opportunity would be greater because the number would be less, and the teaching not only more thorough, but more vivifying through the more intimate relation of teacher and pupil. Under those conditions the voluntary system will not only be possible, but will come of itself; for every student will know what he wants and where he may get it, and learning will be loved, as it should be, for its own sake as well as for what it gives. The friends of university training can do nothing that would forward it more than the founding of post-graduate fellowships and the building and endowing of a hall where the holders of them might be commensals, remembering that when Cardinal Wolsey built Christ Church at Oxford his first care was the kitchen. Nothing is so great a quickener of the faculties or so likely to prevent their being narrowed to a single groove as the frequent social commingling of men who are aiming at one goal by different paths. If you would have really great scholars, and our life offers no prize for such, it would be well if the university could offer them. I have often been struck with the many-sided versatility of the fellows of the

English colleges, who have kept their wits in training by continual fencing with another.

“During the first two centuries of her existence it may be affirmed that Harvard did sufficiently well the only work she was called on to do, perhaps the only work it was possible for her to do. She gave to Boston her scholarly impress ; to the Commonwealth her scholastic impulse. To the clergy of her training was mainly intrusted the oversight of the public schools ; these were, as I have said, though indirectly, feeders of the college, for their teaching was the plainest. But if a boy in any country village showed uncommon parts, the clergyman was sure to hear of it. He and the squire and the doctor, if there was one, talked it over, and the boy was sure to be helped onward to college, for, next to the five points of Calvinism, our ancestors believed in a college education ; that is, in the best education that was to be had. The system, if system it should be called, was a good one, a practical application of the doctrine of natural selection. Ah ! how the parents, nay, the whole family, toiled and pinched that this boy might have the chance denied to them. Mr. Matthew Arnold has told us that in contemporary France, which seems doomed to try every theory of enlightenment by which the fingers may be



burned or the house set on fire, the children of the public schools are taught in answer to the question, 'Who gives you all these fine things?' to say, 'The State.' Ill fares the State in which the parental image is replaced by an abstraction. The answer of the boy of whom I have been speaking would have been in a spirit better for the State and for the hope of his own future life: 'I owe them under God to my own industry, to the sacrifices of my father and mother, and to the sympathy of good men.' Nor was the boy's self-respect lessened, for the aid was given by loans, to be repaid when possible. The times have changed, and it is no longer the ambition of a promising boy to go to college. They are taught to think that a common-school education is good enough for all practical purposes; and so perhaps it is, but not for all ideal purposes. Our public schools teach too little or too much; too little, if education is to go no further; too many things, if what is taught is to be taught thoroughly. And the more they seem to teach, the less likely is education to go further; for it is one of the prime weaknesses of a democracy to be satisfied with the second-best if it appear to answer the purpose tolerably well, and to be cheaper — as it never is in the long run. Harvard has done much, by raising its standard,

to force upward that also of the preparatory schools. The leaven thus infused will, let us hope, filter gradually downward, till it raise a ferment in the lower grades as well. What we need more than anything else is to increase the number of our highly cultivated men and thoroughly trained minds, for these, wherever they go, are sure to carry with them, consciously or not, the seeds of sounder thinking and of higher ideals. The only way in which our civilization can be maintained, even at the level it has reached; the only way in which that level can be made more general and be raised higher, is by bringing the influence of the more cultivated to bear with more energy and directness on the less cultivated, and by opening more inlets to those indirect influences which make for refinement of mind and body.

“Democracy must show its capacity for producing, not a higher average man, but the highest possible types of manhood in all its manifold varieties, or it is a failure. No matter what it does for the body, if it do not in some sort satisfy that inextinguishable passion of the soul for something that lifts life away from prose, from the common and the vulgar, it is a failure. Unless it know how to make itself gracious and winning, it is a failure. Has it done this? Is it doing this? Or

trying to do it? Not yet, I think, if one may judge by that commonplace of our newspapers, that an American who stays long enough in Europe is sure to find his own country unendurable when he comes back. This is not true, if I may judge from some little experience, but it is interesting as implying a certain consciousness, which is of the most hopeful augury. But we must not be impatient; it is a far cry from the dwellers in caves to even such civilization as we have achieved. I am conscious that life has been trying to civilize me for now nearly seventy years with what seem to me very inadequate results. We cannot afford to wait, but the race can. And when I speak of civilization I mean those things that tend to develop the moral forces of man, and not merely to quicken his æsthetic sensibility, though there is often a nearer relation between the two than is popularly believed.

“The tendency of a prosperous democracy—and hitherto we have had little to do but prosper—is toward an overweening confidence in itself and its home-made methods, an over-estimate of material success, and a corresponding indifference to the things of the mind. The popular ideal of success seems to be more than ever before the accumulation of riches. I say “seems,” for it may

be only because the opportunities are greater. I am not ignorant that wealth is the great fertilizer of civilization, and of the arts that beautify it. The very names of civilization and politeness show that the refinement of manners which made the arts possible is the birth of cities where wealth earliest accumulated because it found itself secure. Wealth may be an excellent thing, for it means power, it means leisure, it means liberty.

“ But these, divorced from culture, that is, from intelligent purpose, become the very mockery of their own essence, not goods, but evils fatal to their possessor, and bring with them, like the Nibelung hoard, a doom instead of a blessing. I am saddened when I see our success as a nation measured by the number of acres under tillage, or of bushels of wheat exported, for the real value of a country must be weighed in scales more delicate than the balance of trade. The gardens of Sicily are empty now, but the bees from all climes still fetch honey from the tiny garden plot of Theocritus. On a map of the world you may cover Judea with your thumb, Athens with a finger tip, and neither of them figures in the prices current, but they still lord it in the thought and action of every civilized man. Did not Dante cover with his hood all that was Italy six hundred years ago? And if

we go back a century, where was Germany unless in Weimar? Material success is good, but only as the necessary preliminary of better things. The measure of a nation's true success is the amount it has contributed to the thought, the moral energy, the intellectual happiness, the spiritual hope and consolation of mankind. There is no other, let our candidates flatter us as they may. We still make a confusion between huge and great. I know that I am repeating truisms, but they are truisms that need to be repeated in season and out of season.

“The most precious property of culture and of a college as its trustee is to maintain high ideals of life and its purpose, to keep trimmed and burning the lamps of that Pharos, built by wiser than we, which warps from the reefs and shallows of popular doctrine. In proportion as there are more thoroughly cultivated persons in a community will the finer uses of prosperity be taught and the vulgar uses of it become disreputable. And it is such persons that we are commissioned to send out with such consciousness of their fortunate vocation and such devotion to it as we may. We are confronted with unexpected problems. First of all is democracy, and that under conditions in great part novel, with its hitherto imperfectly tab-

ulated results, whether we consider its effects upon national character, on popular thought, or on the functions of law and government. We have to deal with a time when the belief seems to be spreading that truth not only can, but should be, settled by a show of hands rather than by a count of heads, and that one man is as good as another for all purposes — as indeed he is till a real man is needed ; with a time when the press is more potent for good or for evil than ever any human agency was before, and yet is controlled more than ever before by its interests as a business than by its sense of duty as a teacher, giving news instead of intelligence ; with a time when divers and strange doctrines touching the greatest human interests are allowed to run about unmuzzled in greater number and variety than ever before since the Reformation passed into its stage of putrefactive fermentation ; with a time when the idols of the market-place are more devoutly worshipped than ever Diana of the Ephesians was ; when the electric telegraph, by making public opinion simultaneous, is also making it liable to those delusions, panics and gregarious impulses which transform otherwise reasonable men into a mob, and when, above all, the better mind of the country is said to be growing more and more

alienated from the highest of all sciences and services, the government of it. I have drawn up a dreary catalogue, and the moral it points is this — that the college, in so far as it continues to be still a college, as in great part it does and must, is, and should be, limited by pre-existing conditions, and must consider first what the more general objects of education are, without neglecting special aptitudes more than cannot be helped. That more general purpose is, I take it, to set free, to supple and train the faculties in such wise as shall make them most effective for whatever task life may afterwards set them, for the duties of life rather than for its business, and to open windows on every side of the mind where thickness of wall does not prevent it. Let our aim be, as hitherto, to give a good all-round education, fitted to cope with as many exigencies of the day as possible. I had rather the college should turn out one of Aristotle's four-square men, capable of holding his own in whatever field he may be cast, than a score of lop-sided ones developed abnormally in one direction. Our scheme should be adapted to the wants of the majority of undergraduates, to the objects that drew them hither, and to such training as will make the most of them after they come. Special aptitudes are sure to take care of them-

selves, but the latent possibilities of the average mind can only be discovered by experiment in many directions. When I speak of the average mind, I do not mean that the courses of study should be adapted to the average level of intelligence, but to the highest, for in these matters it is wiser to grade upward than downward, since the best is the only thing that is good enough. To keep the wing-footed down to the pace of the leaden-soled disheartens the one without in the least encouraging the other. 'Brains of three generations,' says Machiavelli, 'are those that understand of themselves, those that understand when another shows them, and those that understand neither of themselves nor by the showing of others.' It is the first class that should set the stint; the second will get on better than if they had set it themselves, and the third will at least have the pleasure of seeing the others show their paces.

"In the college proper, I repeat, for it is the birthday of the college that we are celebrating, it is the college that we love and of which we are proud—let it continue to give such a training as will fit the rich to be trusted with riches, and the poor to withstand the temptations of poverty. Give to history, give to political economy, the



ample verge the times demand, but with no detriment to those liberal arts which have formed open-minded men and good citizens in the past, nor have lost the skill to form them. Let it be our hope to make a gentleman of every youth who is put under our charge; not a conventional gentleman, but a man of culture, a man of intellectual resource, a man of public spirit, a man of refinement, with that good taste which is the conscience of the mind, and that conscience which is the good taste of the soul. This we have tried to do in the past; this let us try to do in the future. We cannot do this for all at best; perhaps only for the few; but the influence for good of a highly trained intelligence and a harmoniously developed character is incalculable, for, though it be subtle and gradual in its operation, it is as pervasive as it is subtle. There may be few of these, there must be few, but —

“That few is all the world which with a few  
Doth ever live and move and work and stirre.”

“They who, on a tiny clearing pared from the edge of the woods built here, most probably from the timber hewed from the trees they felled, our earliest hall, with the solitude of ocean behind them, the mystery of forest before them, and all

about them a desolation, must surely (*si quis animis celestibus locus*) share our gladness and our gratitude at the splendid fulfilment of their vision. If we could have but preserved the humble roof which housed so great a future, Mr. Ruskin himself would almost have admitted that no castle or cathedral was ever richer in sacred associations, in pathos of the past and in moral significance. They who reared it had the sublime presence of that courage which fears only God, and could say confidently, in the face of all discouragement and doubt, 'He hath led us forth into a large place; because He delighted in me He hath delivered me.' We cannot honor them too much; we can repay them only by showing, as occasions rise, that we do not undervalue the worth of their example.

"Brethren of the alumni, it now becomes my duty to welcome in your name the guests who have come, some of them so far, to share our congratulations and hopes to-day. I cannot name them all and give to each his fitting phrase. Thrice welcome to them all, and as is fitting, first to those from abroad, representatives of illustrious universities that were old in usefulness and fame when ours was in its cradle, and next, to those of our own land from colleges and universi-

ties which, if not daughters of Harvard are young enough to be so, and are one with her in heart and hope. I said that I should single out none by name, but I should not represent you fitly if I gave no special greeting to the gentleman who brings the message of John Harvard's College Emmanuel. The welcome we give him could not be warmer than that which we offer to his colleagues, but we cannot help feeling that in pressing his hand our own instinctively closes a little more tightly as with a sense of nearer kindred. There is also one other name of which it would be indecorous not to make an exception. You all know that I can mean only the President of our country. His presence is a signal honor to us all, and to us all I may say a personal gratification. We have no politics here, but the sons of Harvard all belong to the party which admires courage, strength of purpose and fidelity to duty, and which respects, wherever he may be found, the —

*Justum et tenacem propositi virum,*

who knows how to withstand the

*Civium ardor prava jubentium.*

He has left the helm of State to be with us here, and so long as it is intrusted to his hands

we are sure that, should the storm come, he will say with Seneca's pilot, 'O Neptune, you may save me if you will ; you may sink me if you will ; but whatever happens, I shall keep my rudder true.' "

## CHAPTER XXIII.

INTERNATIONAL COPYRIGHT — LOWELL AT CHICAGO

— RICHARD III.

THE scene in the room of the Senate Committee on Patents on the morning of January 29, 1886, was one of most interesting and significant importance. James Russell Lowell, president of the American Copyright League, then and there presented in person his arguments in favor of International Copyright. Says one who was present at the debate :

“The journals of the country have already printed Lowell’s words, but no report, verbatim or otherwise, could re-create the atmosphere of this remarkable scene. The legislative power, that very power hitherto appealed to in vain through generations of authors and congressmen, was here confronted in behalf of the intellectual world, in behalf of public morality, and in the name of common honesty and common sense, by one of the chief living exponents of literature, — who is also one of the chief citizens of the republic. Nothing

could exceed the tact, good nature, ready wit, and hurtling sarcasm with which Lowell took the field. A gentleman well known in the Washington lobby, and opposed to the measure, had been permitted to precede Mr. Lowell. This, as it were, gave for his lance, at the most fortunate moment, an embodied foe; though we doubt whether the subject of his genial and exquisite scorn will ever realize that, like one of the heroes of Dante's 'Inferno,' he was then and there transfixed for all time. The keenest thrusts were accompanied by a twinkle of the eye, a pleasant falling inflection of the voice, or a smile that was like the glistening of a Damascus blade, with an edge as sharp as its glitter. It was not only in direct assault that Lowell proved his ability, but throughout the long session by answering quickly and ably the questions coming to him from every side, by turning off queries too vague for answer with, for instance, some quotation from Charles Lamb, and himself asking questions that went to the marrow of the subject. When, in answer to a question, the president of the league answered, 'I do not know of any way in which nations distinguish themselves except by their brains, that is, permanently to make an impression upon all mankind,' those present could not help thinking how the truth of this

statement was illustrated by the author of the 'Biglow Papers' and the 'Commemoration Ode,' whose name to-day is known among the cultured throughout the world quite as familiarly as that of any battle ever fought under the American flag.

"But the great value and force of Lowell's argument lay in the fact that he had lifted up the whole discussion from the level of interests and expediences into the clear air of duties and moralities. While he said with all distinctness and with iteration that, so far as human foresight could determine, the granting of foreign copyright would benefit American literature, would not make books dear and would be for the good of the whole country, with still greater emphasis he upheld the leading issue. Said Lowell, 'I myself take the moral view of the question. I believe that this is a simple question of morality and justice; that many of the arguments which Mr. — used are arguments which might be used for picking a man's pocket. One could live a great deal cheaper, undoubtedly, if he could supply himself from other people without any labor or cost. But at the same time — well, it was not called honest when I was young, and that is all I can say. I cannot help thinking that a book which was, I believe, more read when I was young than it is now, is quite

right when it says that "Righteousness exalteth a nation." I believe this is a question of righteousness. I do not wish to urge that too far, because that is considered too ideal, I believe. But that is my view of it, and if I were asked what book is better than a cheap book, I should answer that there is one book better than a cheap book, and that is a book honestly come by.'

"I am in favor of cheap books. I am not in favor of books poorly printed in order to make them cheap, because I think we should soon be suffering as much through our eyes as the German nation is suffering from their bad paper and print, and their obstinacy in still using the German type, which is bad for the eyes. From the little experience I have had of some of the cheaper literature that is printed in this country, I think one could not read half an hour without danger to one's eyes. That is really an almost national consideration. But I should be very glad to have some conversation with the committee on this subject, some suggestion from them rather than to talk somewhat at random. I should like to ask in answer to one of the points which Mr. Hubbard made — the notion, namely, that there was no common-law property in books — what is the origin of property? I am not sure that that has ever been quite set-



tled. I think the general theory is that it was force; that the stronger man got possession of what he could, and held it; that force takes the precedence of right, as Bismarck says. Advancing civilization is supposed to have found a better system.

“But there are many pieces of property for which we cannot show any common-law right. We can show custom ‘whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary.’ And Mr. Hubbard’s notion that there is any meaning in the fact that copyright was issued first to publishers springs simply from the fact that as the publisher had to buy the right of publication, the copyright was in him as the lawyers would say; it was not in the author any longer. That follows as a matter of course. As for copyright being a modern species of property, that is very natural, if you remember that it could not possibly have arisen before the invention of the art of printing. To a certain extent, even while books were in manuscript, the author held property in them as his own. Of course he could not altogether prevent piracy. But if you consider any important books before the introduction of printing — take the most popular book, for example, of the Middle Ages (except certain partial versions of the Scriptures),

the *Divina Commedia* of Dante ; it is so long that really the trouble of copying would almost have given the copyist a right to the possession of the book. The trouble and cost operated as a safeguard to the author. The reason that copyright is modern is because the art of printing is modern, and because the rapid multiplication of books is even more modern than the invention of printing."

We cannot give the whole debate, but a well-known writer has summed it up as follows :—

"The moral question is, and always has been, the leading issue in this controversy, so long left unsettled through the clamoring of narrow and selfish interests — interests too often able to command the degrading subserviency of brains fitted to nobler uses. It is the moral question that has most interested the thoughtful and honorable portion of the community — which, let us not doubt, is, in fact, the great body of the reading public of these United States."

On the twenty-second of February, 1887, Lowell was greeted at the Central Music Hall, Chicago, by a brilliant audience assembled to hear him deliver an address on American Politics.

"On the platform was a distinguished array of gentlemen, including ex-cabinet members, Federal

and State judges, generals, ecclesiastical dignitaries, and many leading representatives of the commercial interests of Chicago and the Northwest. On behalf of the Union League Club, General George W. Smith, introducing Mr. Lowell, explained that the address was the first of an annual series under the auspices of the club, the idea being to inaugurate if possible a revival of the general recognition of the birthday of Washington and create among the people a higher political culture.

Mr. Lowell on coming forward was greeted with prolonged applause. He said :—

“When I received the invitation to speak here to-night, and, indeed, until a short time ago, I had an impression that I was to speak as one of a course. It was an erroneous impression, I know, but it was a sincere one. I was offered my choice of two topics, politics or literature, and at first I chose politics ; but I now appear in a new capacity to announce a change of programme. After having written an address on politics, when I came to read it over, I felt I stood in a very delicate position. I was to address a mixed audience—an audience composed of both parties. I was not speaking in my own person, but as the representative of a club composed of both

parties. Now, I believe, I have been in the habit at times of speaking my mind pretty strongly, perhaps sometimes too strongly, but I found this was an occasion on which I was placed in a delicate position, where I could not express myself with entire frankness, as one speaking in my own person. You all know, of course, quite as well as I do that a text is a mere *brutum fulmen*, without direct and immediate illustration, and I have observed, as I dare say you have, that direct and immediate illustrations seem to have some personal applications in them. Direct applications and illustrations seem to have gone to the school of the prophet Nathan, and if they do not say in so many words 'Thou art the man,' they always seem to imply it. It seemed to me I had better throw up my political discourse, though with great reluctance, because I could not make it to my mind, and shall fall back on the other limb of the choice offered me — that is, some literary topics. I am the more convinced of the wisdom of the choice since my arrival in Chicago, for it would cause me the greatest possible regret if any word of mine should mar the cordiality of a welcome which will be one of the pleasantest recollections of my life. I shall therefore ask you to listen to a few words on criticism, and then apply them to the play of

‘Richard III.’ and to the absence of certain things in that play which seem to indicate to my mind it is not Shakespeare’s work.”

The speaker then proceeded with the dissertation on “Richard III.,” showing how the very opening of the play was clumsy, and that there was little in it, save the soliloquy of Clarence, and some part of the speech of Richard to his army, that was in keeping with the master mind. Shakespeare might have edited or retouched the play, but it was impossible to conceive that he originated it. “It may be safely said,” continued Lowell, “that since the publication of Wordsworth’s ‘Peter Bell’ no quotation has done such effective service as —

“A primrose by the river’s brim,  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more.”

“It has been assumed as Wordsworth assumed, that by this very sincerity and simplicity of vision, and by his honesty in letting it be known, Peter was somehow guilty of a blacker treason than that of his great namesake in the servants’ hall in the palace of the High Priest. Nobody seems, however, to have thought of asking under what theory of duty poor Peter was bound to have those nice optics see what was not to be seen. And it is as

useless to ask for a new trial in the case of Peter Bell as in that of Socrates. He had been guilty of a misprision of high æsthetics, that most unpardonable of all crimes — for does it not involve almost a blindness of your view of a primrose, and, what is still worse, of my view of a primrose? He must be content to sit pilloried forever as the typical Philistine. Were it only for the alliteration one is almost inclined to pity poor Peter. No doubt but under a practical and strictly business view of the question the culprit could find a great deal to say for himself had he owed Wordsworth a shilling, for example, and offered a sixpence in full payment on the ground that the smaller coin was a great deal more to him than to his creditor. It may be suspected that the defective vision would have shifted to the side of the late poet laureate. The French juries, when a highly atrocious crime has been tried before them, have an old fashion of agreeing upon a verdict of guilty with extenuating circumstances. And I myself, in the case of Peter Bell, am sometimes inclined to think that there may be grounds on which even he might be recommended to mercy.

“Is it not, I ask, a relief to meet now and then with a person who sees things precisely as they are? And especially is it not a relief sometimes

to meet such people in criticism? Is not even Dr. Johnson's want of subtlety sometimes almost refreshing in an age when criticism is peculiarly what is called creative, when each critic is bound to dive deeper and to come up — I won't venture to say with our legendary — higher than his predecessors, and professing to have seen something in the depths of the primrose that nobody ever saw there before? He must either be original or be paradoxical, as the cheapest counterfeit of originality, or there seems to be no good reason for his being at all. I have in the course of my life met with critics who have gone about to persuade me that I ought not to like Gray, or Cooper, or Scott, or Byron, and I know not whom else, simply because they were not as Wordsworth or Shelley was. Nay, it has been hinted sometimes that even Shakespeare himself was no better than he should be. Whatever feast of wit has been spread for us by the choicest spirits of all times, we really seem to be in danger of finding ourselves, like Sancho in his Governorship of Baratania — scarcely is there a dish set before us but the steward touches it with his staff and orders it away as of a nature to disagree with us.

“No doubt it is perfectly true that the very highest forms of poetical imagination are of a supreme

rarity, and that their culmination, impassionate intensity of utterance, is even rarer. The flash is gone ere one can say 'lightning.' There is certainly no such pang of intellectual pleasure as when our own imaginations, drawn forth and kindled by that of the poet in such a supreme moment, are mingled with it in an embrace of fire; but there is a region of milder and more equable delights, less feverish and perhaps more wholesome for 'human nature's daily food.' If 'man cannot live by bread alone,' so neither can he live by stimulants and spices alone. It is one of the highest offices of criticism to teach us how to find a field of not only what is best, but also what is good of its kind in all the arts. Mr. Ruskin holds a divining rod of exquisite sensitiveness as well for the more recondite sources of purified enjoyment as for those more obvious and nearer to the surface; and the breadth of the great Goethe's mind, the catholicity of his culture, and therefore of his apprehension, is nowhere more to be noted than in his hospitality to every variety of merit, be it high or low. We are reminded by his character of the Arab legend in which the hero is said to have had three hundred and sixty-five gates to his palace to admit guests, one for every day in the year. We turned around on the majority of the



poets of the last century, as the teacher of rhetoric did on M. Jourdain, and astonished them very much by telling them that they had been talking prose all their lives without knowing it. It cannot be denied that there were just causes of complaint, for most people like to take their poetry neat, and the mixtures these gentlemen supplied in perfect good faith contained as large a proportion of water as the proverbial milk of commerce. The reaction was justifiable; but it went, I think, too far, as is generally the case with such oscillations of sentiment. Nothing short of imagination in its highest and deepest manifestations would satisfy us; nothing short of expression distilled to the very quintessence of poignant praise. A definition of poetry came into vogue which would exclude Horace and the other delightful workers in fancy, which would exclude Crabbe and others. But there is surely a great deal of literature of which one is inclined to say, with Mercutio: 'It is not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church-door, but it is enough. It will serve.'

"It was precisely this kind of literature on which the new tests told with most destructive force. But I find myself insensibly diverging from what I meant to say, which is that however excellent the style of criticism may be which finds infinite

deeps and marvellous revelations in a primrose, it may yet be very grievously misapplied. I think it has been notoriously so misapplied of late years in the case of Shakespeare, and especially by some of the later German critics. There has been a competition among them in seeing more and deeper than any one has ever seen before. Shakespeare is supposed to have written with so many conflicting rules of man's relation to the universe as would have prevented his writing at all. A simpler view of the case would seem to be that he was a playwright who, because he happened also to be a great poet and a profound observer, gradually developed into the most marvellous dramatist that ever lived. I propose to say a few words on one of the plays usually attributed to him—a play in respect of which I find myself in the position of poor Peter Bell, seeing a little more than an ordinary primrose where I perhaps hoped to see a plant, a flower of light. I mean the play 'Richard III.' Horace Walpole, you remember, wrote his 'Historic Doubts' about the character of Richard III., and I shall venture my critical doubts as to the authorship of the play which bears his name. I have no intention of applying to it the system of criticism which I consider as untrustworthy as it is fasci-

nating, and which I think has already been carried beyond its legitimate limits. All that I should believe it absolutely safe to say of Shakespeare is that he never wrote deliberate nonsense, nor was knowingly guilty of defective metre; and even tests like this I would apply with commendable modesty and hesitating reserve, conscious that the meaning of words, and, still more, the associations which they call up—and an important fact always to remember in reading literature as old as Shakespeare—has changed since his day, that the accentuation of many words was variable, and that Shakespeare's ear might very likely have been as delicate as his other senses. On the point of Shakespeare's verse, I may say in passing that his verse is often used as a test for the period of which his plays were written. Coleridge, whose sense of harmony and melody was perhaps finer than that of any modern poet, did not allow his own dramatic verse the same license, or I might almost say the same mystifications which he esteems so valuable in interpreting that of Shakespeare. This is certainly remarkable. For my own part I am convinced that if we had Shakespeare's plays as he wrote them and not as they have come down to us, deformed by the careless hurry of the copyists, who copied the parts at

the emendation of incompetent actors, the mishearing of shorthand writers, I am convinced that we should not find a demonstrably faulty verse or a passage obscured for any other reason than because of its depth of thought or its highest subtlety of phrase. I know that in saying this I am laying myself open to the reproach of applying common sense to a subject which of all others demands uncommon sense for its adequate treatment ; demands a perception and divination almost as infallible as the operations of that creative mind the attempts to measure which are illusive and seemingly abnormal.

“But in attempting to answer a question like that I have suggested I should be guided by considerations far less narrow. We cannot identify printed thoughts by the same minute comparisons that would serve to establish the handwriting of them. To smell a rose is surely quite otherwise convincing than to count its petals. In guessing at the authorship of an anonymous book like the ‘Doctor,’ or Bulwer’s ‘Timon,’ for example, while one should lay some stress upon tricks of manner, I should be far less influenced by the fact that many passages were above or below the ordinary level of any author whom I suspected of writing it, than by the fact that there was a sin-

gle passage, however short, absolutely different in kind from his habitual tone. A man may surpass himself or he may fall below himself, but he never escapes from his own nature. I would not be understood to mean that common sense is always or universally applicable in criticism. Certainly common sense will never suffice for the understanding or enjoyment of those fine translunary things that our first poets did, as one of our first poets himself, Drayton, said of them, but it is at least a remarkably good precaution against mistaking a hand-saw for a hawk.

“What, then, is the nature of the general considerations which I think we ought to bear in mind in debating a question like this — the authenticity of one of Shakespeare’s plays? First of all and last of all I should put style; not style in its narrow sense of mere verbal expression, for that may change and does change with the growth and training of a man, but in the sense of that something, more or less clearly definable, which is always and everywhere peculiar to the man, and either in kind or degree distinguishes him from all other men — the kind of evidence which, for example, makes us sure that Swift wrote ‘The Tale of a Tub’ or Scott ‘The Antiquary,’ because nobody else could do it. There is a gait

which marks the mind as well as the body. But even if we took the word style in that narrower sense which would define it as the diction or form of phrase, Shakespeare is equally incomparable. Coleridge, evidently using the word in this narrower sense, tells us that 'Such divinity doth hedge our Shakespeare round that we cannot even imitate his style. I have tried to imitate his manner in the "Remorse," and when I had done I found I had been tracking Beaumont and Fletcher and Massinger instead.' It is really very curious. Greene, a contemporary of Shakespeare, in a well-known passage seems to have accused him of plagiarism, and there are verses, and sometimes a succession of verses, by Green himself, by Peale, and especially by Marlowe, which are comparable so far as externals go with Shakespeare himself. Nor is this at all wondered at in men so nearly contemporary with Shakespeare. No one comes so near to the versification of Shakespeare as Spenser and Marlowe. Some of the verses of Marlowe have the same trick of ringing in the ear as Shakespeare's. There is, for instance, the famous description of Helen, or rather exclamation of Faust when he first sees Helen :

"Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?"

“A phrase which, if I am not mistaken, lingered even in the ear of Shakespeare. But the most characteristic verses of Shakespeare himself do not so much linger in the ear as to embed themselves in the very substance of the mind and quiver years after in the memory like arrows that have just struck and still feel the potent impulse of the bow. No whole scene of Shakespeare, even in his 'prentice days, could be mistaken for the work of any other man; for, give him room enough, and he is sure to betray himself by some quality which is either his alone or his in such measure as none ever shared but he. I am reminded of a remark of Prof. Masson which struck me, that one day, when tired with overwork, he took up a copy of Dante, and after reading in it for half an hour he shut the book and found himself saying to himself: ‘Well, this is literature.’ And I think that this may be applied to the mature work of Shakespeare, and in a great measure even to the work of the young Shakespeare. Take the whole scene together, and there are sure to be passages in it of which we cannot say that they are really literature in that high meaning of the word.

“It is usual to divide the works of Shakespeare by periods, but it is not easy to do this with even

an approach to precision unless we take the higher qualities of structure as a guide. As he matured, his plays became more and more organisms and less and less suppositions of juxtapositions of scenes strung together on the thread of the plot. In assigning periods too positively, I fancy we are apt to be misled a little by the imperfect analogy of the sister art of painting and by those who are called the great masters. But manual dexterity is a thing of far harder and slower acquisition than the art of melodious versification. The fancy of young poets is only too apt to be superabundant. It is the imagination which ripens with the judgment, and asserts itself as the shaping faculty in a deeper sense than belongs to it as a mere maker of pictures when the eyes are shut. Young poets, especially if they are great poets, learn the art of versification early, and their poetical vocabulary increases by exercise, and they can pick out and assimilate what is to their purpose with astonishing rapidity. The lyrical poetry of Dante was at least in part written before he was twenty-five, and in some respects it is as perfect as anything in his maturer works. Keats died even younger than that and left behind him poems that astonish us as much by their purity of style and their Attic grace of form as they take us cap-



tive by their music. I think it is very interesting to find Shakespeare improving on a phrase of his own. It is something that no one else could do. This he does in some of his sonnets. The thing in which we should naturally expect Shakespeare to grow more perfect by practice and observation would be in a knowledge of stage effect and skill in presenting his subject in the most telling way. It would be on the side of the dramatist or the playwright rather than on the side of the poet that we should look for development. To him, as to Molière, his perfect knowledge of stage business gives an enormous advantage. If he took a play in hand to remodel it for his company, it would be the experience of the actor more than the genius of the poet that would be called into play. His work would lie in the direction probably of curtailment oftener than of enlargement; and, though it is probable that in the immature plays attributed to him in the edition of 1623, yet it is hard to believe that he can be called their author in anything like the same sense as we are sure he is the author of those works in which no other hand has ever been capable of the same mastery. It must be remembered that we come to the reading of all the plays attributed to Shakespeare with the preconception that they are his,

If we come to a play thinking it is his, it is astonishing how many things we excuse, how many things we slur over, and so on for various reasons not entirely satisfactory, I think, if strictly cross-examined. The German poet and critic Goethe believed in the Shakespearean authorship of all the supposititious plays, and in regard to one of them, at least, 'The Yorkshire Tragedy,' drew his arguments from the diction. Now, so far as mere words go, the dramatists of Shakespeare's time all drew from the same common fount of vocabularies. The movement of their verse so far as it was mechanical would naturally have many points of resemblance. One of the tests is that of the double ending—that is, where there is a superfluous syllable at the end of the verse. Shakespeare tried it now and then in the choruses of 'Henry V.', and it was used in 'Henry VIII.', and used there with considerable success. The finest examples almost of the picturesque verse of Shakespeare are to be found in the choruses of 'Henry V.', and in one of those, the chorus of the third act, you will find that the double ending occurs very frequently and is used most adroitly both for the purpose of the melody of the verse and to give a certain undulating motion to it, as Shakespeare described the fleet :

“‘A city on th’ inconstant billows dancing;  
For so appears this fleet majestic,  
Holding due course to Harfleur. Follow, follow.’

“Mr. Lowell then read various passages from Beaumont and Fletcher, Chapman and other poets, comparing them with Shakespeare and characterizing them as almost artificial in the comparison. He also quoted copiously from ‘Cymbeline’ and others of Shakespeare’s plays, and said :

“‘I do not think it would be easy to find a whole scene in one of Shakespeare’s acknowledged plays where his mind seems at dead low tide throughout, and lays bare all its shallows and its ooze. I think it is sometimes even a defect that he is apt to be turned out of his direct course by the first metaphysical quibble, if I may venture to call it so, that pops up in his path.’

“The lecturer read Arcite’s ‘Invocation to Mars,’ and called attention to the beautiful pictures it presented. The second character of Shakespeare was as a humorist, but the lecturer dwelt only slightly upon this point. The third character of Shakespeare was his eloquence, which was well illustrated by Antony’s oration over the body of Cæsar and the dialogue between Ulysses and Achilles in ‘Troilus and Cressida.’ The three greatest qualities of Shakespeare were subtlety of

poetic inspiration, humor and eloquence. Shakespeare's patriotism was also commented upon, and the lecturer called attention to the fact of his ardent patriotism as shown in his plays, with possibly the exception of 'Richard III.' Shakespeare's treatment of the element of the supernatural was well worthy of attention, because it showed the singularly philosophical turn of his mind. In 'Hamlet' the Prince does not believe in the existence of the ghost for a long time. In 'Macbeth,' in the scene where Banquo's ghost takes the Thane's seat, Macbeth sees the apparition, while to the rest of the company it is invisible. The procession of ghosts in 'Richard III.' always struck Mr. Lowell as rather ludicrous and odd, rather than impressive. The speech of Henry V. before the walls of Harfleur was specially commended as a specimen of eloquence. The cause of various peculiarities in some of the plays ascribed to Shakespeare was accounted for on the supposition that Shakespeare had simply remodelled old plays instead of producing them from the raw material himself. In this connection he said :

“‘It appears to me that an examination of “Richard III.” plainly indicates that it is a play which Shakespeare adapted to the stage, making ad-

ditions, sometimes longer and sometimes shorter ; and toward the end he either grew weary of his work or was pressed for time, and left the older author, whoever he was, pretty much to himself.

. . . While I firmly believe in the maintenance of classical learning in our universities, I never open my Shakespeare that I do not find myself wishing that there might be professorships established for the expounding of his works, as there used to be for those of Dante in Italy. There is nothing in our literature so stimulating and so suggestive as the thoughts which he seems to drop by chance as if his hands were too full of them. Nothing so cheery as his humor, nothing that laps us in elysium so quickly as the lovely images which he marries to the music of his verse. He is also the great master of rhetoric in teaching us what to follow, and also perhaps quite as often in teaching us what to avoid. I value him above all for this, that for those who know no language but their own, there is as much intellectual training to be got from the study of Shakespeare's works as from those of any — I had almost said from any of the ancients — I had almost said of all the ancients put together.' ”

“An elaborate banquet was tendered to Mr. Lowell in the evening by the Union League Club.

Covers were laid for three hundred and twenty-five guests. The principal speakers were Congressman Jehu Baker, General Lucius Fairchild and Mr. Lowell. The remarks of Mr. Lowell were of an informal character, but were wholly devoted to a discussion of various phases of politics in this country. The burden of the speech was that the so-called 'practical politician' and the corner-grocery politician must go. He did not give any further explanation for changing the subject of his afternoon address, although the matter has caused much comment."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### LECTURES AT THE LOWELL INSTITUTE.

**D**URING the winter of 1887 Lowell delivered an interesting series of lectures before the Lowell Institute upon the "Early English Dramatists." From these lectures we make the following extracts :

"The names of Beaumont and Fletcher are as inseparably linked together as those of Castor and Pollux. They are the double star of our poetical firmament, and their names are so closely mingled that it is vain to attempt any division of them that shall assign to each his rightful share. The general tradition seems to have been that Beaumont contributed artistic judgment, and Fletcher fine frenzy. There is probably a grain of truth in traditions of this kind. In the plays written by the two poets jointly, we may find an intellectual entertainment in assigning this passage to one and that to the other ; but we can seldom say decisively, 'This is Beaumont's and that is Fletcher's,' though we may find tolerably convincing ar-

guments for doing so. Fletcher, I should say, probably added very much to the subtleness of conversational phrases in the drama. In short, what I have been hesitating to hint is that I am glad to think Fletcher more the poet of the two. Both had the art of being pathetic, and of conceiving pathetic situations, but neither of them had depth enough of character for that tragic pathos which is too terrible for tears. Beaumont and Fletcher's comedies are certainly amusing, and one of them, 'Wit Without Money,' is excellent, with some scenes of a joyous vein in it that are very cheerful. The fourth scene of the third act is a masterpiece of fanciful extravagance. This is probably Fletcher's.

"The conversations in Fletcher's comedies are often laughable, but what is called the wit of them is generally a gentlemanlike banter—that is, what was gentlemanly in that day. Nothing grows mouldy so soon as mere fun, the product of animal spirits. Fletcher had far more of this than of true humor; and yet both he and Beaumont were skilled in that pleasantry which is a skillful substitute for that trenchant article in good society. Nearly all of their comedies have the merit of being laughable, which, to one who has read many comedies, is saying a great deal. I do not mean



to say that Fletcher does not sometimes show an almost tragic power, as he constantly shows tragic sensibility. Beaumont and Fletcher have drawn upright women. We must never forget that the coarseness of phrase is not always coarseness of thought. Women were allowed to talk then and to use words now forbidden outside of the slums. Decency changes its terms, though not its nature, from one age to another. This is a partial excuse for Beaumont and Fletcher, but they sinned against that intellect of the conscience which is the same in all ages. The comparison sometimes instituted between Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher suggests one remark of some interest, namely, that not only are his works by far more cleanly in thought and phrase than those of any other of his important contemporaries ; not only are his men more manly and his women more womanly than others, but his types of gentlemen and ladies are altogether beyond any they seem to have been capable of conceiving. I think Beaumont and Fletcher rank next to Shakespeare in their importance and in the amount of pleasure they give, though not in the quality of it, in the fanciful charm of expression. In spite of all their coarseness there is delicacy and sensibility, an airy romance, and, above all, a grace, in their best work.

that make them forever attractive to the young and to all those who have learned to grow old amiably. Their poetry is genuine, spontaneous and at first hand. The delight they give, the gayety they inspire, are all their own. Perhaps one main cause of this is their lavishness, their happy confidence in resources that never failed them. Their minds worked without that unwilling creak which pains us in most of the later dramatists. They had that pleasure in writing, evidently, which gives pleasure in reading; and they deserve our gratitude because they promote cheerfulness, or a pen-sive kind of melancholy that is very far from sadness."

The third lecture in the course was given to an audience limited in numbers, as at all the other lectures, only by the size of the room. The special subject was "John Webster."

"Lowell spoke of his reference in his opening lecture to the deficiency in respect to form which is to be observed in nearly all the dramatic literature of the time under consideration. In a play, said the lecturer, we not only expect a succession of scenes, but that each scene shall lead to something that follows. That is to say, the structure should be organic, with a necessary relation of the parts, and not merely with a mechanical and hap-

hazard joining of one part to another. In the arrangement of a play the majority of the elder playwrights were so unskilled, or so negligent, that they seemed perfectly content if a story got divided into the proper intervals of acts or scenes, and arrived at last to a satisfactory end in marriage or murder, as the case might require. The motives which impel and control the movement are seldom sufficiently apparent. There seems to be no reason why any one of the characters should do this or that more than another. They are servants of all work, ready to be villain or fool at a moment's notice. The weakness of the earlier playwrights was that they esteemed those bounds best that were largest, and let their action grow till they were obliged to stop it. Many of Shakespeare's contemporary poets must have had every advantage he had in practical experience, and all of them probably had as familiar an intercourse with the theatre as he ; but what a difference between their manner of constructing a plot and his ! In all his dramatic works his skill in this is more or less apparent ; in his mature days, unrivalled. From the very first scene he seems to have beheld, as from a tower, the end of all. In *Romeo and Juliet*, for example — and I turn to that as being a comparatively early play — he has

a story before him and follows it closely enough, but how naturally one scene is linked to another. How directly each scene leads to the next. If this play illustrates anything, it would seem to be that our lives are ruled by chance; but nothing is left to chance in the action. The play advances with the exactness of destiny. The characters are made subordinate to the interests of the play, as if it were something in which they had a concern.

“‘These thoughts,’ said Mr. Lowell, ‘have brought forcibly to my mind the miscellaneous crudities of plot in the plays of John Webster. All we know of Webster may be very shortly summed up. We do not know when he was born. We do not know when he died. All that we really know about him is that he first appears in 1601 as having assisted in a certain play, and that he disappears in 1624. In his plays the plots are very complicated, and they are made still more puzzling by the somewhat motiveless conduct of many of his characters. When Webster invented a plot of his own, he filled it with scenes and incidents such as not merely to baffle the understanding, but such as the imagination cannot get over. There is something in Webster that reminds me of Victor Hugo. There is at times the same confusion of what is big with what is great; the same fondness

for moral speculation, the same insufferably repulsive details, the same indifference to probability, the same leaning toward the grotesque, the same love for effect at whatever cost. Whatever other effect Webster may produce upon us, he never leaves us indifferent. We may criticise as we will, but we shudder and admire, nevertheless.' ”

The special topic for the evening of the closing lecture was “Massinger and Ford.”

“Lowell said that Philip Massinger was born in 1584 and died in 1639. His father was Arthur Massinger. Very little is known of the early life of Philip Massinger. It is certain, however, that he spent four years at Oxford University, though without taking a degree. Massinger wrote thirty-seven plays, of which only eighteen have come down to us. To me, said Mr. Lowell, Massinger is one of the most interesting, indeed, one of the most delightful, of the old dramatists ; not so much for any passion or power in him, though at times he does rise to both of them, but for the love he manifests toward those things which are lovely and of good report in human nature, his sympathy for what is generous, high minded and honorable, and for the equable flow of good, every-day kind of poetry, with a few rapids or cataracts, but singularly smooth and companionable. His plays generally

show excellent versification, with skillful breaks and pauses, and admitting great variety of emotion. Massinger never rants and is never bombastic. In him nothing seems written merely to fill up empty space. His plays are interesting for the story and the way it is told. I doubt if there are as many short passages of sparkling wit to be found in his works as in those of inferior men. But in reading him one feels that he is in the company of a serious and thoughtful person, if not a great thinker. Indeed, few great thinkers are so interesting as he. If he never calls out all the forces of his readers to attempt to solve the profound problems of psychology, he is infinitely suggestive of not unprofitable reflection. His is a world whose course is equable and where calm pleasures abide.

“I read through ‘The Arabian Nights’ a few years ago with as much pleasure as I did when I was a boy. It appears to me to be the business of an imaginative writer to offer us a sanctuary from the world of the newspaper, in which we live and have to live, whether we will or no. Unskillful story tellers always raise our suspicions by putting a foot note to every improbable occurrence, which says ‘This is a fact.’ So, when the realist says ‘These are the facts of life,’ all I can say is, that if these are facts, I do not want them. The police

reports give me more than enough every day. But the real facts are such as are recognized in the deep chambers of the soul. The old poets had a very lordly contempt for probability, when improbabilities would serve the purpose better. But Massinger taxes our credulity less than most of them. I do not remember any of those sudden conversions in his works, from baseness to loftiness and from vice to virtue, which trip up all our expectations so startlingly in many an old play. And as to material improbabilities, let us remember that two hundred and fifty years ago many things were possible that are not possible now. Then men might be taken captive by the Corsairs or the turbaned Turk, as occasion might require, and sold into slavery. The boundaries of the probable, if not the possible, were far wider then than now. Massinger was discreet in the use of these privileges. His conception of character was ideal. He impresses one as a manly kind of person, and to that we owe no small share of our pleasure in reading his works.

“Referring to the poet Ford, who formed a part of his subject for the evening, the lecturer said that the association of him with Massinger was altogether an arbitrary one, as there was nothing in common between them. Ford was a poet who

was a master of the artificial appeals to emotion which may be styled sentimentality. He has always an air of saying something without ever saying it, and is therefore disagreeable to a man who values time. He lingers over his heartbreaks too much.

“In closing his course, Mr. Lowell expressed his thanks to his hearers for the patient attention with which they had followed him, and spoke in earnest words of the value of the poetical studies as tending to develop the spiritual side of our natures, and to ransom us out of the hard and prosy actuality which is growing too prevalent in our age.”

Summing up his wonderful powers we can well join in the eulogy of one who says : —

“Lowell is now in the mellow maturity of his reputation as our chief man of letters, and has the added prestige of having made himself illustrious as the minister of the United States at the court of Saint James. He is not likely to go higher, unless in his late prime he bursts upon the world with a fresh outpouring of the fullness of original song, in which he has given proof that the source of his inspiration is not exhausted. He need not go higher to hold a permanent place in letters and in the history of his country. It is this feeling of his well-deserving recognition, and of his true



modesty in not seeking it, which has called forth, wherever he has appeared since his return from England, the voluntary plaudits of his fellow-country-men."

In his recent contributions to *The Atlantic Monthly*, we see the "Lowell fecit" upon every poem, and hear the ring of the true coin. As an observing writer says : —

"We have sought for some dominant characteristic, and have found the singer resolved into oracle, philosopher, statesman, preacher, wit. With such protean shape we cannot grapple. Let us declare him, without reservation, the foremost all-round poet that America has thus far brought forth. And let posterity, if it can, undo the verdict."

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